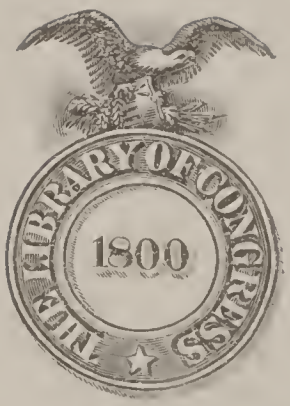
MEDITATIONS FOR MONTHLY RETREATS



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MEDITATIONS FOR MONTHLY RETREATS

"Come to Me, all you that labor and are burdened, and I will refresh you." (St. Matt. xi. 28).

MEDITATIONS FOR MONTHLY RETREATS

FOR THE USE OF RELIGIOUS

WITH PREFACE

BY

REV. H. C. SEMPLE, S.J.

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PREFACE.

After the mission is over and the parish has come back to every-day piety, there are always some good souls in trouble of conscience, and the pastor or ordinary confessor is slow to place the blame of the trouble on the preaching of the missionary. For has he not weekly experience of some of his flock taking in a wrong sense his own matter-of-fact Sunday announcements, which he has dinned into their ears in plain words and strong tones? And how can he now be surprised that doctrines of theology or spirituality have not been caught right by all, or that burning words of censure, which had to be spoken for the lax sinner, have been taken especially for themselves by the saints of over delicate conscience?

However, as he sits down to his post-mission task in the confessional, with these best friends of God kneeling at his feet and

putting their souls in his hands, although deeply moved with tender sympathy for their anguish of heart, he is perhaps amused at the sameness of the stumbling blocks which the missions always raise in the way of persons, who are intelligent in all matters that do not touch their souls closely, but who are, on these points, over literal in mind and over timid in conscience. And perhaps he uses the privilege of long mutual confidence to make them laugh at their own follies.

They fear that they have left out some mortal sin from their general confession, whereas the old friend who knows them well assures them that they had no mortal sin to confess, and, even if they had, they forgot that the rule for completeness of confession was made by the good Jesus, Who died that they might be easily forgiven, and that His rule is that after one serious trial to tell all mortal sins, no one is bound to try again. They fear that some things are now certain which were told as doubtful, and the answer is that even though they are now certain—which the confessor denies—the sincere telling them as doubtful was enough. They

fear that they may have consented fully to some grievous temptation without being fully conscious of such consent, and they are told in the language of the old ascetic that this is as absurd as to suppose a roaring lion could be in a well kept room without being noticed there. They fear that the fact that they have the same kind and number of venial sins to tell every week is an evident sign that they lack a serious purpose of amendment, and the confessor takes this fact as evidence that they have a most serious purpose of avoiding sins of worse kinds and of checking the number of these venial faults, if they are really sins at all and not, most of them, mere temptations.

They dread lest their communions may be sacrilegious on account of some mortal sin they are not conscious of, and they are told that even if this absurd supposition were granted true, and that they had in their soul some huge monster which they could not see, yet if they have only ordinary attrition, not only is their communion not bad but is believed by theologians to be good and useful; for in this case, the Body and Blood of Our

Lord, although a sacrament of the living which ordinarily supposes the life of habitual grace, would Itself destroy the death of mortal sin in the soul and produce the life of grace. Here Our Lord would be truly the Lamb of God Who taketh away sin, the Lord saying the word and making us worthy for Him to enter under our roof, the good Rabboni whose pure feet cleansed the impure lips and soul of Magdalen through the kiss of love. At least, they fear that they are not good enough to receive communion so frequently, and they must be reminded that Pius X. has settled this question for all time, and told us that all may go to communion every day, if only they are free from mortal sin and have an upright intention.

Again, they fear that they are making no progress and had better give up trying, because year in and year out they have the same defects which they have not conquered. But, granting that they have the same defects, they must not forget that goodness is not only negative, but also positive, that it is not only in avoiding bad acts but also in doing good acts; and that so long as we are in

the state of habitual grace, or friendship with God, and remain in this state, by avoiding any act of mortal sin, even though we may be then committing many deliberate venial sins and thereby heaping up fuel for our purgatory, we may be, at the same time, doing countless good acts and heaping up treasures of gold, or supernatural merit, for heaven and eternity. So that if we have been living such a life, it would be better for us to die next year than this year, or to-morrow than to-day, because we should thus be higher in heaven, with more good works following us there.

Again, they are distressed that they have no affectionate love for God; and they must be taught that the angels never feel any such sensible affection, and that charity, or love for God because He is good, is in the intelligence and will. Here they must be cautioned against some of the old prayer books, which are tinged with Rigorism or Quietism, and which make the virtue of charity an impossible chimera that leaves all hope behind, and tell us that perfect love, or charity, does not look at God as our Father in heaven,

Who is kin to us, and made us, and redeemed us, to be happy with Him in heaven. They must be reminded that the great Doctors, from St. Augustus to St. Alphonsus, tell us that the first commandment of loving God with our whole heart is easy for all the ordinary faithful and is common among them, and that if Our Lord's sign of true love for God is that we keep the commandments, how assured these good souls ought to be that they have it, when they not only keep the commandments which bind under mortal sin but do so many other good things which are not of strict precept but only of counsel.

Of course, there are many degrees in the virtue of charity; but even though we cannot love God as often as the angels or blessed in heaven, and even though we are not always ready to avoid all imperfections or even deliberate venial sins, yet, as long as we are ready to avoid mortal sin, because God is good, we still remain in His friendship and have the virtue of charity.

Finally, if the good sisters complain that they might as well leave the convent, because they are not leading lives of perfection, they

must be told to be quiet on this score as long as they are tending to perfection by a resolve to keep their vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience.

Such are the main troubles of the devout that follow in the wake of a mission, and those that follow after a retreat, made under the guidance of a preacher or of a book, are nearly the same. These troubles are reduced to a minimum only by prudence—that rarest of all virtues—and it is for this excellence that this little classic is commended to superiors and directors. It is old to readers of German and Flemish, but now makes its first appearance in an English dress.

The method which it closely follows is that of Saint Ignatius, and has been in such exclusive use by numbers who make the daily meditation, that for them it is like second nature. The subjects at the head of the brief chapters are the old great truths to which we must ever be going back, when we wish to reform our thoughts, desires and lives. The arguments and texts, chosen to enforce these truths, are the old telling ones, which as familiar friends gain the easier access to our

mind and heart. And yet, although the method, subjects, arguments and texts are old, the make-up of the book, with its happy way of putting things, will be found refreshing and novel.

In our day of unrest—which has begun to invade even books of spirituality—that a book is old and tried, and found to be sound in doctrine and sane in word, will be a special recommendation. It is expected that its first welcome will be from those for whom it was primarily written, viz., religious women who have the holy habit of giving one day each month of their life to a preparation for death. Breathing pure Catholic air in the convent, they are blessed with the best appetite for the food of spiritual reading, and this new way of serving old viands will add to their relish and digestion.

But as the Imitation, the Introduction to a Devout Life, and other such books, which were originally written for particular classes, are now perused with fruit by persons of all the classes who have souls to save or sanctify; so, too, this little treatise on the fundamental practical truths may gain a warm and wide

welcome. Its easy, copious style makes it well suited for reading in the refectory. With a few phrases blotted out here and there, the director of the Holy Hour or such other popular devotions, will find in it many meditations that seem made to order for him. Preachers of missions, or of Lenten instructions to the people, or of retreats to communities, will discover in it a rich mine of matter easy to assimilate.

May this little book help many souls to depth and fulness of Catholic life.

Rev. H. C. Semple, S.J.

CONTENTS.

JANUARY.

PAGE

MEDITATION I. *O Sacrum Convivium! O Holy Banquet!*

FIRST POINT.—Holy Communion is a holy banquet 1

SECOND POINT.—Effect of this holy banquet 4

MEDITATION II. *Gratitude to God.*

FIRST POINT.—Why are we bound to be grateful toward God?..... 8

SECOND POINT.—In what shall our gratitude consist? 11

MEDITATION III. *The Value of Time.*

FIRST POINT.—Time is most precious 14

SECOND POINT.—We should not lose a moment 17

FEBRUARY.

PAGE

MEDITATION I. *"Come and see."*

FIRST POINT.—What do we see by faith in the Blessed Sacrament?... 20

SECOND POINT.—What do we hear by faith from the mouth of Jesus? 23

MEDITATION II. *The Spirit of Faith.*

FIRST POINT.—It is of the greatest importance to possess the spirit of faith 26

SECOND POINT.—How have we cultivated the spirit of faith heretofore? 29

MEDITATION III. *The Barren Fig-Tree.*

FIRST POINT.—"A certain man had a fig-tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it, and found none." 33

SECOND POINT.—"And he said to the dresser of the vineyard: Behold for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore; why cumbereth it the ground?"..... 35

PAGE

THIRD POINT.—"But he answering, said to Him: Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig about it, and fertilize it. And if happily it bear fruit: but if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down." 37

MARCH.

MEDITATION I. *Our First and Our Last Holy Communion.*

FIRST POINT.—Our first Holy Communion 40

SECOND POINT.—Our last Holy Communion 43

MEDITATION II. *Mortification.*

FIRST POINT.—We must not neglect exterior mortification 47

SECOND POINT.—Interior mortification is to be practised above all.... 49

MEDITATION III. *The Worth of Our Soul.*

FIRST POINT.—Our soul is so very precious because it was created to the likeness of God..... 53

PAGE

SECOND POINT.—Our soul has been ransomed by the blood of Jesus Christ 55
THIRD POINT.—Our soul is destined to possess God eternally..... 56

APRIL.

MEDITATION I. *Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament Our Benefactor.*
FIRST POINT.—Jesus bestows a great benefit on us in Holy Communion. 59
SECOND POINT.—What should we give Jesus? 62
MEDITATION II. *Hope.*
FIRST POINT.—Why must I hope?... 65
SECOND POINT.—How must my hope be? 67
MEDITATION III. *The Happiness of the Religious Vocation.*
FIRST POINT.—A religious vocation is a happiness because it withdraws us from many dangers..... 70
SECOND POINT.—A religious vocation is a happiness on account of the advantages it affords..... 72

MAY.

PAGE

MEDITATION I. *Jesus Sought, Found and Kept by Mary.*

FIRST POINT.—Mary seeks Jesus.... 76
SECOND POINT.—Mary finds Jesus.. 78
THIRD POINT.—Mary keeps Jesus... 80

MEDITATION II. *Love for Jesus Christ.*

FIRST POINT.—Jesus deserves our love 82
SECOND POINT.—How we should testify our love for Jesus..... 85

MEDITATION III. *The Religious in Judgment.*

FIRST POINT.—What have I received? 88
SECOND POINT.—What have I believed? 90
THIRD POINT.—What have I vowed? 91

JUNE.

MEDITATION I. *Spiritual Communion.*

FIRST POINT.—It is easy to communicate spiritually 95

PAGE

SECOND POINT. — Spiritual Communion is most pleasing to God... 97
THIRD POINT.—Spiritual Communion is most useful to us..... 98
MEDITATION II. *Humility.*
FIRST POINT.—What is humility?... 101
SECOND POINT.—Necessity of humility 103
MEDITATION III. *The Fear of God.*
FIRST POINT.—We must fear the punishments of God..... 106
SECOND POINT.—We must fear offending God 108
THIRD POINT.—We must fear God Himself 110

JULY.

MEDITATION I. *The Hidden Life of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.*
FIRST POINT.—Jesus, the hidden God. 113
SECOND POINT.—Why does Jesus hide in the Blessed Sacrament?... 115
MEDITATION II. *Meekness.*
FIRST POINT.—Jesus Christ requires meekness from us..... 120

PAGE

SECOND POINT.—Our neighbor requires meekness from us..... 122

THIRD POINT.—Meekness is necessary for us 123

MEDITATION III. *Jesus Christ, Our Witness.*

FIRST POINT.—Jesus Christ as God is omnipresent and witness of our actions 126

SECOND POINT.—Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is our witness in a special manner 128

THIRD POINT.—We must always walk in the presence of God..... 129

AUGUST.

MEDITATION I. *"Behold I Come Quickly."*

FIRST POINT.—Who comes to me?.. 132

SECOND POINT.—To whom does Jesus come? 134

THIRD POINT.—Why does Jesus come to me? 136

PAGE

MEDITATION II. *Jesus, Zealous for Souls.*

FIRST POINT.—Jesus Christ zealous for souls in His public life..... 139

SECOND POINT.—Jesus Christ full of zeal for souls in His passion.... 141

THIRD POINT.—Jesus Christ zealous for souls in the Blessed Sacrament 143

MEDITATION III. *Mutual Forbearance.*

FIRST POINT.—Forbearance is a necessity of charity..... 145

SECOND POINT.—Forbearance is a demand of the divine law..... 147

THIRD POINT.—Forbearance is required in justice 149

SEPTEMBER.

MEDITATION I. *Thanksgiving after Holy Communion.*

FIRST POINT.—The duty of thanksgiving 151

SECOND POINT.—How our thanksgiving must be made..... 155

PAGE

MEDITATION II. *Prayer.*

FIRST POINT.—Why must we pray constantly? 158

SECOND POINT.—How must we pray constantly? 161

MEDITATION III. *Perseverance.*

FIRST POINT.—Necessity of perseverance 164

SECOND POINT.—Means of perseverance 165

OCTOBER.

MEDITATION I. *The Motives that Induced Jesus to Institute the Blessed Sacrament.*

FIRST POINT.—Jesus instituted the Blessed Sacrament that we might think of Him always..... 171

SECOND POINT.—Jesus instituted the Blessed Sacrament to give us a worthy sacrifice 173

THIRD POINT.—Jesus instituted the Blessed Sacrament to prepare a nourishment for our souls..... 175

PAGE

MEDITATION II. *Our Wishes and Desires.*
FIRST POINT.—What does the Sacred Heart desire? 178
SECOND POINT.—We should make the desires of the Sacred Heart our desires 180
MEDITATION III. *The Death of a Good Religious.*
FIRST POINT.—The past consoles her. 184
SECOND POINT.—The present gives her confidence 186
THIRD POINT.—The future does not frighten her 188

NOVEMBER.

MEDITATION I. *The Effects of Holy Communion.*
FIRST POINT.—Holy Communion preserves and increases purity in our soul 191
SECOND POINT.—It increases and preserves the strength of our soul.... 194
THIRD POINT.—It ennobles and perfects the soul..... 196

PAGE

MEDITATION II. *Resignation to the Will of God.*

FIRST POINT.—In what does perfect resignation to the will of God consist? 198

SECOND POINT.—On what must our resignation to the will of God rest? 200

THIRD POINT.—What advantage does resignation to the will of God bring? 202

MEDITATION III. *End of Man.*

FIRST POINT.—Why was I created?. 204

SECOND POINT.—Wherefore am I a Christian? 206

THIRD POINT.—Why am I a religious? 208

DECEMBER.

MEDITATION I. *The Miracles of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.*

FIRST POINT.—Holy Communion is a miracle of love..... 211

SECOND POINT.—Holy Communion is a miracle of power..... 213

PAGE

THIRD POINT.—Holy Communion is a miracle of patience..... 216

MEDITATION II. *Jesus in the Crib, a Model of Obedience, Poverty, and Chastity.*

FIRST POINT.—The crib teaches us obedience 218

SECOND POINT.—The crib teaches us holy poverty 220

THIRD POINT.—The crib teaches us holy chastity 223

MEDITATION III. *Heaven.*

FIRST POINT.—The reward of heaven is an overflowing joy..... 225

SECOND POINT.—The reward of heaven is unmixed joy..... 228

THIRD POINT.—The reward of heaven is eternal joy..... 230

Meditations for Monthly Retreats

JANUARY.

MEDITATION I.

O Sacrum Convivium! O Holy Banquet!

PRAYER BEFORE MEDITATION.

ALMIGHTY, eternal God, God of mercy and love, I am unworthy to bend the knee before Thee, much less to speak to Thee, to open my heart before Thee. I know and confess that Thou art present here, really and truly, and that without Thee I can do nothing. I come, a child, to Thee my best, most benevolent Father, and ask Thee in the simplicity of my heart to let all my thoughts and emotions, desires and resolutions be purely and exclusively for Thy service, for the glory of Thy Divine Majesty. Enlighten my understanding that I may know the di-

vine truths; move and direct my will by Thy grace, that I may conform my whole life according to these truths.

Our Father. Hail Mary.

First Prelude.—Behold Jesus Christ saying, "Take ye and eat, this is My body" (Matt. xxvi. 26).

Second Prelude.—Grant us, O Lord, to venerate the mysteries of Thy sacred body and blood in such a manner as to experience in us the fruits of Thy Redemption forever (Prayer of the Church).

First Point. Holy Communion is a Holy Banquet.—Consider why this banquet is holy. Who prepares it? Is He not the Son of God, the Holy of holies, the lovable Redeemer of the world? For whom does He prepare it? Who are His guests, His invited? Many pious, holy souls, to be found over the whole world. I, too, poor sinner though I am, belong to them, I with my soiled festal garment. What food will be served? No ordinary dish, flattering the senses for a moment—no; a heavenly,

divine food—indeed, a divine food! For Christ Himself, the God-man, is received. He, whom the angels and saints of heaven adore; He, who constitutes their everlasting happiness, their eternal joy, becomes food for me. He comes to me, descends into me, unites Himself with me in a manner more intimate than can be conceived, thus enabling me to exclaim with the Apostle, "I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). But how? Am I called to receive Jesus Christ; I, a sinner, to receive the Holy of holies? I, a miserable worm of the earth, to commune with the King of kings, the Lord of hosts? O wonderful event! A despicable slave eats at the table of her master!

For what purpose has this holy banquet been prepared? As a memorial of the Passion and death of my God and my Lord, in memory of the nameless sufferings which He endured in the Garden of Olives, at the column of flagellation, on the road to Calvary, on the cross! "As often as you shall

eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26).

What honor, what happiness for me to be allowed to partake of this holy banquet! How solicitous must I be that my festal garment show not the least stain! How ardently must I sigh, long for the day, the moment of Holy Communion! How duty bound am I to thank Jesus Christ for so inestimable a gift!

Second Point. Effects of this Holy Banquet.—Our holy Church sums them up in these words: "O holy banquet, by which the soul is replenished with grace, and we are given a pledge of eternal glory."

The soul is replenished with grace. After Holy Communion I possess Jesus, the source of all grace. What else could I wish for? "He that spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how hath He not also, with Him, given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.)

I have in me not only the light, but the Source of all light; not only power and

strength, but the Origin of all power. Yes, it is true and I believe what St. Teresa says: "A single Holy Communion suffices to make a saint of me"—and yet after so many Holy Communions I am still so imperfect. To whom must I ascribe this? Only to myself, not to Holy Communion. If my heart were free from all sin, from earthly inclinations and distractions, surely then it would be filled with graces, for Jesus longs for nothing more ardently than to infuse them into my soul. Yet, as a vessel partly filled with a liquid can only partly receive another, so our heart can receive grace only to the extent that it is free from inordinate inclinations.

A pledge of eternal glory is given to us—if I receive Jesus worthily I may firmly hope to be saved. Our Saviour is not satisfied with giving us a thousand means of salvation, with assurance by words that He desires our salvation, that He has written us in His hand, and carries us in His heart. Above all this, He wants to give us a pledge that shall prove to us how surely and con-

fidently we may trust His love and His promises. And what a pledge! No silver, no gold, no precious stones, He wants to give—nothing less than Himself. Oh! if a mother opened a vein of her arm to feed her child with her blood, who could doubt the love of such a mother? Jesus does much more for me. To give me an eternal, blessed life, He feeds me with His divine flesh and blood, and says to me: Whosoever eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John vi. 55). O God, what a consolation for me when I shall be lying on my death-bed and when the thought of Thy judgment shall frighten me: "Why art thou sad, O my soul, and why dost thou disquiet me? Hope in God" (Ps. xlii. 5). In my last moments my Redeemer will come to me, to give Himself to me as a pledge of eternal joy. How could I then fear the Judge—He that is going to judge me sojourns in my heart to console and encourage me.

Soon Jesus Christ will again descend into

me. O Lord, free my heart from all earthly things, fill me with Thy grace, that Thy entrance may indeed be for me a pledge of future glory. Give me now those sentiments which I wish to have on my deathbed.

Prayer after Meditation.

O my God, I offer Thee all my good thoughts, all holy inspirations and resolutions which Thou hast deigned to infuse, for Thy greater honor and for the salvation of my soul, during this meditation. I place them in Thy holy hands, in order that they may be preserved there for eternity and never depart from my memory. I confide to Thee my body, and my soul with all its powers, which I will use only to carry out the resolutions which I have just made. O Lord, give me Thy grace. Blessed Virgin, my dear Mother, holy guardian angel, holy patrons, be my intercessors with God, and secure for me the grace to participate in the homage you render at the throne of the Most High, so that after this temporal life I may

love, praise, and adore Him with you for all eternity.

MEDITATION II.

Gratitude to God.

First Prelude.—Behold Jesus Christ as He asks, in disappointment, after healing the ten lepers: "Were not ten made clean? And where are the nine?" (Luke xvii. 17.)

Second Prelude.—Most blessed Virgin, who hast offered God such ardent thanks in thy magnificent canticle, give me a share in the feelings of gratitude that animated thee.

First Point. Why Are We Bound to Be Grateful Toward God?—Holy Church reminds us in every Mass of our duty of gratitude, and at the same time shows us the reason why we have to fulfil this duty.

"Let us render thanks to the Lord, our God—for this is truly meet and just, right and salutary, that we should always and in all places give thanks to Thee, O holy Lord, Father almighty." It is *meet,* that is, honorable for us, to be permitted to thank God. Who is God, that He deigns to accept my

thanks? And who am I? — He is the most Holy, the Almighty, the eternal God, whom cherubim and seraphim adore—I am but a poor worm of the earth, unworthy to lift my eyes to Him; my lips are sullied, my hands stained and unclean. It is *just* that I thank God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Has not my life been a chain of God's benefits toward me? What have I that I did not receive? Have I not to thank Thee, my heavenly Father, for my existence, for my immortal soul, created according to God's likeness, and for my body, endowed with so many noble faculties? The Redemption with its fruits, Thy Passion, Thy blood, Thy tears, Thy doctrine, and Thy example, Thy holy sacraments, Thy continual presence in the tabernacle—are all these not gifts of Thy goodness, O my Jesus? Thee, O Holy Ghost, I have to thank for my call to the true faith and to the religious state, for the numerous inspirations and graces that keep faith alive in me. Truly, no claim can be proved clearer than the claim of God to my

gratitude! And how do I show my gratitude? O God, have mercy on me according to the multitude of Thy mercies!

It is moreover *right* that I thank God. I should take it very ill of a beggar if he gave no thanks for an alms received. It gives us pleasure to see evidences of gratitude even in irrational creatures, yet I, a rational being, forget so often that God is my greatest benefactor; while receiving from Him the greatest tokens of love, I scarcely am mindful of the fatherly hand that bestows them.

It is *salutary* to be grateful to God. "Be thankful for the smallest," says Thomas à Kempis (Im. ii. 10), "and you shall be deemed worthy to receive greater things. "Ingratitude," says St. Bernard, "is the enemy of the soul, it is a singeing wind that dries up the source of grace."

Understand then, my soul, that you truly owe thanks to God; ask His pardon for your lack of gratitude, promise amendment and invite all creatures to praise and thank God with you.

Second Point. In What Shall Our Gratitude Consist?—According to St. Thomas Aquinas, gratitude embraces three points, namely: acknowledgment of the benefit, expression of thanks, and the good use of the benefit. I must, then, acknowledge the benefit that God has bestowed on me by creating me, redeeming me, saving me when I was in sin, by offering me so many means of salvation; all these I must appreciate, by recalling to memory the highness of the Giver, the grandeur of His gifts, and the love with which He bestowed them. "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and never forget all He hath done for thee" (Ps. cii. 2).

I must also express my thanks, show forth His gifts. "Come and hear, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what great things He hath done for my soul" (Ps. lxv. 16).

God requires a proof of my gratitude, and justly. He Himself offers me occasions to give it several times a day. My morning and night prayers, the prayers before and after meals, the canonical Office, are they not so

many chances of offering God my due thanks? Jesus Christ Himself is willing in holy Mass to be an offering of thanks, whereby we can return as much to God as we have received; for we can not receive more nor return more than Jesus Christ, through whom the angels praise the majesty of God, whom the heavenly choirs adore, and before whom the powers of heaven tremble.

I must also make good use of the benefits of God, that is, use them for His honor. St. Augustine says, "We are robbing God if we do not return His benefits to Him." What should one say, then, if we manufacture weapons out of them to fight against our Benefactor and to offend Him? Enter into yourself, my soul, and examine earnestly: How stands my gratitude to God? Does it lack any of the three points mentioned? Are my morning and night prayers truly an act of thanksgiving to God? Do not my hurry and distraction during prayers before and after meals turn them into offenses instead of thanksgivings? And my Office?

Would I risk giving thanks to a man in the manner in which I often recite it?... Do I remember that holy Mass is not only a sacrifice of petition and expiation, but above all a holocaust of thanksgiving?... And how do I use the other benefits of God? My senses—my eyes?... my tongue?... my hands?... my talents?... my intellect?... my memory?... my will? How do I profit by the numberless graces that I receive?... by the countless inspirations of the Holy Ghost?... by the holy sacraments of confession and Communion?... by the sufferings and crosses that likewise are benefits from God?

O God, have mercy on me, a poor sinner! How many of Thy benefits I have forgotten, paid with ingratitude, ill-used! On account of my ingratitude, I do not deserve that the earth bear me any longer: I deserve to be despised by all creatures. But I will amend whatever can still be amended. From now on my life shall be one of thanksgiving, yea, mindful of the exhortation of St. Paul, I will

thank God in happiness and in misfortune, in joy and suffering, "for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning you all" (1 Thess. v. 18). From the bottom of my heart I exclaim, and wish that all creatures would incessantly repeat with me through all eternity: Thanks be to God, through Jesus Christ, Our Lord.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

The Value of Time.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ saying earnestly to the Jews, "Yet a little while the light is among you; walk whilst you have the light, that the darkness overtake you not" (John xii. 35).

Second Prelude.—An ardent prayer to know the value of time.

First Point. Time is Most Precious.—With all the gold of the earth we could not purchase *one* minute. St. Bernard says, "Time is worth as much as heaven, for

heaven is the reward for the good employment of time." A moment well used gained paradise for the thief on the cross. The better we employ our time, the greater our glory in heaven will be.

"Time," St. Bernard continues, "is worth as much as the blood of Jesus Christ." The value of a thing corresponds to the price that experts put upon it. And what price did the Son of God, eternal Wisdom, pay to obtain for us time in which to work out our salvation? His blood to the last drop. What is more precious than the blood of Jesus Christ, a single drop of which, according to St. Thomas, suffices to cancel the debts of the whole world?

How precious must time be, then, since its purchase price is the blood of Jesus Christ! St. Bernard ventured to say, "Time is worth as much as God Himself, for every well-used moment can procure us the eternal possession of God!" No wonder that God is so economical in the distribution of time, giving it only drop by drop. Like an arrow the

moment passes; if we do not seize it, it is lost, irrevocably lost. Where is the moment now in which we just considered this? Gone! and no one can recall it; other moments come and go, and thus time hurries past us, never coming to a standstill.

These truths should encourage me, but also fill me with a certain fear. How great is the goodness of God that He grants me, continually, free disposal of my time! Yet how it grieves me to have lost so much of it already! How unaccountable that I make such bad use of it! Who knows how long I may have time? Will the next moment be mine? Nobody knows. Oh, what folly! "You kill time," says St. Bernard, "that God grants you to do penance, to obtain pardon, to acquire grace, to conquer heaven! You squander time that is given you to regain God's favor and your lost inheritance, to assure yourself the society of angels and your promised salvation, to raise up your enfeebled will and to bewail your sins" (St. Bernard, *De triplici custodia*).

Second Point. We Should Not Lose a Moment.—What time should I consider lost? That time in which I, yielding to sloth, neither think nor do anything useful. Consider, my soul, that sloth is not only the beginning of all vice, but robs you of a treasure of infinite value. It is worse still, if you use the allotted time for sin. How many moments, hours, and days I have lost in my life! If I have performed my daily work merely and exclusively from natural motives without any higher intention, taken my meals, enjoyed recreation or the night's rest merely and exclusively to satisfy my nature, then all the time applied to these ends is lost for eternity! What a misfortune, what a loss! And that, perhaps, occurs every day! How much will that amount to in a lifetime? If I perform my works, even the best, at a time or in a manner not in accordance with the duties of my calling, if, for instance, I pray when I should work, sleep when I should be awake, work when I should pray or sleep, then the time employed in all these occupations is lost.

When I am not in the state of grace my holiest works have no merit, even should I perform them at the right time and in the most perfect manner; at the end of each day passed in this deplorable state I might cry out with the lamentation: "I have earned nothing for heaven, I have lost time and energy! I ran, but outside the track, and therefore in vain." Similarly, I may complain if vanity was the sole motive of my actions. "The precious time has escaped; how can I recall it?"

My soul, what have you to reproach yourself with in this respect? Have you not lost much time by laziness, perhaps the most precious moments of your life, after Holy Communion or in prayer? Have you ever used time for sin on other days less happy? Is that still the case? With what intention do you perform the thousand little, ordinary actions that go to make up the day of a religious?

Is the thought: "For God and for His sake" frequently before your mind? Do you perform your works in the manner, at

the place, and at the time your Holy Rules and your Superior prescribe? Do you not allow vain or sinful motives to rob you of time?

O my God, with all my heart I repent having lost so many precious moments! How different is my conduct from that of the saints, who, "Being made perfect in a short space, fulfilled a long time" (Wisdom iv. 13). Oh that I had their zeal in faithful application of time! How glorious my crown in heaven would become, while now I have to repent bitterly, either on my death-bed or in purgatory, for having allowed so many precious moments to pass by unused. Hear then the resolution, O my God, which I place in the hands of Mary, that she may help me to fulfil it: never to be idle, and to perform all my actions in that state, with that intention, in that place, at that time and in that manner which is in accordance with Thy holy will, the interest of my soul, and my Holy Rule. "My heart is ready, O God, my heart is ready" (Ps. cvii. 1).

Prayer after Meditation.

FEBRUARY.

MEDITATION I.

"Come and see" (John i. 39).

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus answering the question of His first two disciples: "Master, where dwellest Thou?" saying, "Come and see." From the tabernacle Jesus addresses us in the same words.

Second Prelude.—An earnest request to Jesus in the Most Holy Sacrament to open the eyes and ears of our soul.

First Point. What Do We See by Faith in the Blessed Sacrament?—We know that Jesus Christ is here present, truly and substantially, with divinity and humanity, with body and soul, as He dwells in heaven in His glorified body. Our faith, founded

on the words of Jesus Christ, teaches this. In the Blessed Sacrament we have the most sacred body of Jesus, which He took to Himself in the chaste womb of Mary; there are His eyes, that so lovingly and encouragingly rested upon poor sinners; His hands, that toiled in the workshop of Nazareth, that wrought so many miracles and showered such rich blessings on great and small; His sacred Heart, that burned with love for me, and was pierced on the cross in testimony of His love. There are His sacred wounds, once painful and bloody through my fault... His precious blood that He shed to the last drop for me.

O Jesus, pardon me the sins by which I inflicted Thy wounds and shed Thy blood. Yet it is these wounds and this blood that fill me with confidence. Thou retainest Thy wounds on Thy body to show them to Thy heavenly Father for me, and Thou offerest Thy blood to Thy Father as ransom for my trespasses. **"In Thee, O Lord, have I hoped;** let me not be confounded."

There is His holy soul, with all the treasures of virtue: love, humility, meekness, obedience. O Jesus, how different from my soul is Thine. Thine full of virtue, mine full of sins. Now I will earnestly strive to render my poor soul more like Thine... True, to do so will cost labor and struggle, yet I can do everything in Him who strengthens me. Thy soul is resplendent with grace, and from Thy fulness we must all receive. Oh that my poor soul understood how to draw from this source of grace!...

There is, likewise, His adorable Deity. Jesus is One with the Father and the Holy Ghost; He has the same divine nature, the same wisdom and power, the same goodness, the same immutable perfection. Angels and archangels never cease repeating, "Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God of hosts; heaven and earth are full of His glory." O divine Saviour, let me unite my voice with theirs. O angels of God, offer my prayer to Jesus Christ, obtain for me your reverence in His holy presence, your love. *Soul of Christ, etc.*

Second Point. What Do We Hear by Faith from the Mouth of Jesus?—"Listen, My child, and incline thy ear to the words of My mouth;" "Speak, Lord, Thy servant heareth!" (1 Kings iii. 10.) What does Jesus say in the Blessed Sacrament?

Words of sublime instruction: "Take ye and eat, for this is My body" (Matt. xxvi. 26). Even if thy eye beholds but the shape of bread, I, the God of heaven and earth, am concealed in this bread. "Amen, amen, I say unto you: He that believeth in Me, hath everlasting life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert, and are dead. This is the Bread which cometh down from heaven; that if any man eat of it, he may not die. The Bread that I will give, is My flesh, for the life of the world. For My flesh is meat indeed; and My blood is drink indeed" (John vi.)

O Lord, I adore Thee under the veil of bread. I admire in it a mystery of deepest humility and inexpressible love. With St. Thomas Aquinas I exclaim:

"Seeing, touching, tasting, all are here deceived,
But by hearing only safely 'tis believed:
I believe whate'er God's own Son averred,
Nothing can be truer than Truth's very word,
On the cross Thy Godhead, only, was concealed,
Here not e'en Thy manhood is to sight revealed.
But in both believing and confessing, Lord,
Ask I what the dying thief of Thee implored."

Moreover, we hear words of gentle reproach: "My people, what have I done for thee, or with what have I afflicted thee? Answer Me."

"What! could you not watch one hour with Me?" (Matt. xxvi. 40.)

Words of loving admonition: "Amen, amen, I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (John vi. 54). O Lord, let all misfortunes of the earth befall me rather than that I be separated from Thee in eternity.

Words of magnificent promise: "I am the Bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst. He that cometh to Me I will not cast out. And I will raise him up in the

last day. Amen, amen, I say unto you: He that believeth in Me, hath everlasting life. If any man eat of this Bread, he shall live forever. He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood abideth in Me, and I in him" (John vi). O my soul, what treasures are promised me! Jesus will deliver me from the hunger and thirst after earthly joys. On account of this food, even my body will partake of the glory of my soul; eternal life is assured me. Jesus will always be in me and I in Him. What more could I desire? O my Saviour, my Sanctifier! These promises encourage me. Thou lovest me; therefore Thou strengthenest me so often by Holy Communion, therefore Thou wilt enter again into my heart to-day. Come, O my Jesus, come! In my last sickness, when all earthly things vanish, every human aid is in vain, Thou wilt come to me to be my consolation, my support, my help. O, how I shall then wish to have profited by Thy instructions, Thy benevolent reproofs and admonitions, Thy encouraging promises.

Oh, that I were now in the dispositions in which I desire to be at that moment. Lord, give me those sentiments, I entreat Thee by Thy Passion and painful death, by the intercession of the most blessed Virgin Mary, of St. Joseph and St. Barbara.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION II.

The Spirit of Faith.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself our risen Saviour, speaking to Thomas: "Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed" (John xx. 29).

Second Prelude.—Let us conjure Our Lord to grant us the spirit of faith. Beg for it through the intercession of Mary, whose faith the Holy Ghost extolled through the mouth of Elizabeth.

First Point. It is of the Greatest Importance to Possess the Spirit of Faith.—Consider: 1. Man has a threefold vision: the sight of the body, which sees but

the exterior of things; the sight of the intellect, which, though penetrating deeper, is still subject to many deceptions; finally, the eye of faith, which fathoms the essence of things and beholds them as they are before God in the light of truth and eternity.

2. The spirit of faith is of the greatest importance to all Christians, especially to religious. If we allow ourselves to be guided in our actions by the exterior of persons and things, our actions will not only lack every merit, but will often become sinful. If we listen only to the promptings of our natural intellect, our actions will be imperfect and devoid of merit. Only when we act in the light of faith have our works value for eternity; then only, when we perform them carefully, with zeal, the smallest of our actions will be most precious and meritorious before God.

3. God has led us out of the world, that in the solitude of the convent we might acquire the spirit of faith without being hampered by worldly cares. His will is that our life,

more than that of people in the world, embody the words of the Holy Ghost: "My just man liveth by faith" (Hebr. x. 38). What follows from these truths? That everything surrounding us or being enacted around us ought to be viewed with the eyes of faith. In this way everything assumes a different aspect: persons, things, actions, events. O my God, how ashamed and sorry I should be when I consider how little I have used the eye of faith! Instead, I have used my bodily eye. I should consider myself very unhappy to be denied its use; and yet, how often have appearances deceived me, without ever making me wiser. With the eye of the intellect I tried to penetrate the secrets of science and art; how much time I have spent in this way, and lost, perhaps! I kept the eye of faith, this inestimable present of Thy bounty, closed. I was, as it were, blind in this eye. O Lord, enlighten my soul that I may now clearly see what my duty is, and what resolutions I ought to make in Thy presence.

Second Point. How Have We Cultivated the Spirit of Faith Heretofore?—1. In regard to persons. Whom have I beheld in my Superiors? My bodily eye beholds in them simply men; the eye of my intellect beholds perhaps men of experience, knowledge and virtue, perhaps men with faults and foibles (for who in this world is not subject to them?); the eye of faith beholds in them the representatives of God, who neither command nor forbid of themselves, but by the authority given to them by God...

Have I looked at the priest in the light of faith—in my intercourse with him, in the confessional, in the pulpit, at the altar? Have I honored him as the anointed one of the Lord?

In what light have I beheld my subjects? the children, the sick, the needy? Have I seen in them Jesus Christ, who desires instruction and help from me? How have I regarded my sisters in religion? Have I dwelt on the exterior, on their manners, on

their stature, their former situation in the world, and the like outward things that either attract or repel my bodily eye? Have I measured my love and esteem by talents, intellect and character? Alas, Lord, too often I have paid attention to these things and acted accordingly; and I have not considered Thy image in their immortal soul, their destination for heaven, the work of Thy grace!... Just as I have done with others, so have I done with myself. I have bestowed too much care on my body, on the exterior, while my care for the beauty and perfection of my soul has been but little.

2. In regard to things and occupations. O my soul, how much depends on it, that you view these things in the light of faith!... Have I regarded the power of God in the objects that our holy Church blesses for our use, in my rosary, in the holy water, in my crucifix?... If words of Holy Writ occur in my prayers have they impressed me as words of the Holy Ghost Himself?... How have I regarded my religious habit? Is it

the livery of my supreme Lord and King?... How the places of prayer? The genuflections and exercises that I perform? If my faith were lively, I would enter the chapel as the house of the Most High and would consider the bowing of the head and the bending of the knee as evidences of reverence due my Lord and God. Then I would acquit myself of every occupation as of a work for a great King, who leaves nothing unrewarded. Then I would surely not recite my prayers in a manner so as to scandalize others and heap up fuel for purgatory.

3. In regard to actions. Nay, my soul, there are no negligible, no accidental occurrences. If you had the spirit of faith, you would recognize in all circumstances, and would constantly make the application, that nothing happens without God's dispensation, that divine Providence embraces all, even the smallest thing, that without God's knowledge and will no hair falls from our head, no leaf from a tree; and no cross, no difficulty, can come to us, no misfortune can befall us un-

less God from all eternity has destined it for us...

How often, O my God, I have forgotten all this! Remind me of this truth in all the situations of my life, and accept graciously the resolutions which I place at Thy feet. With all and in all things not to be directed by the eye of the body, nor of the intellect, but to view persons, things, occupations, and events with the eye of faith only, and like St. Aloysius to shed the light of eternity over them, frequently asking, "Of what use is this for eternity?"

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

The Barren Fig-Tree.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ, who speaks with great emphasis: "Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit, shall be cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matt. vii. 19).

Second Prelude.—Ask the Lord for grace to make a good meditation, and to be convinced of the necessity of performing good works.

First Point. "A Certain Man Had a Fig-tree Planted in His Vineyard, and He Came Seeking Fruit on it, and Found None" (Luke xiii 6).—Represent to yourself the beautiful tree of which Our Lord speaks in the parable. It is planted in fertile soil, capable of yielding a rich crop. For, behold all around numerous other trees laden with magnificent fruit. This tree likewise has strong limbs, rich foliage, perhaps deep roots... what is lacking then?... Fruit... its branches, leaves, roots, serve no purpose —it is barren.

Is this fig-tree not my own picture? God from the very beginning has planted me as a tree in the fertile soil of the Catholic Church, where nothing was lacking me. Jesus Christ has watered it with His tears and His blood; He gave me His holy Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist, which as fresh foun-

tains watered me and infused into me new, living sap. He gave me Christian parents and teachers to educate and, when needed, to chastise me... Perhaps I was hardly grown up when the Lord transplanted me to a chosen spot in His vineyard, into His special heritage, the holy religious state, among His elect, where He Himself dwelleth among lilies, where more frequently than before He nourishes me with His holy flesh and blood, where I receive numerous instructions by readings, meditations, where I am protected from the poisonous breath of the world... "I have planted a chosen vineyard," says the Lord, "and I fenced it in and picked the stones out of it, and planted it with choicest vines, and built a tower in the midst thereof."

What care on my account, O my God! Justly Thou sayest, "What is there that I ought to do for My vineyard, that I have not done for it?"... And what have I brought forth?...

Alas, perhaps, but leaves, resolutions, sham virtues... And, oh, if I had been barren

only!... "My vineyard brought forth wild grapes" (Is. v.). For this I must not blame the soil, for I am surrounded by many trees laden with the fruits of humility, of zeal, of prayer and modesty. They are my sisters in religion, who receive no more grace than I, who receive no more care than I. How humiliating for me to have been planted in the same fruitful soil, to receive the same attentive love and, nevertheless, not to yield the same fruit! Is that my gratitude, O Lord, for my call to the true faith and the religious life? My Jesus, mercy!

Second Point. "And He said to the Dresser of the Vineyard: Behold for these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and I find none. Cut it down therefore; why cumbereth it the ground?" (Luke xiii. 7.)—Is this not justly deserved? Certainly; yet do I not condemn myself? Three years?... You say too little, O Lord. Has it not been a much longer time during which Thou hast sought fruit on me? It has been many years since

I was admitted to Thy holy Church in Baptism, and I have been long perhaps in Thy select garden, in the convent, and what do you find in me?... Of what kind are my thoughts, my wishes, my works? Alas, my thoughts are often distracted, my wishes and longings terrestrial, my works, occupations, readings, meditations, confessions, Holy Communions, superficial and imperfect, very imperfect!

Cut it down, therefore! Will the Lord, who comes daily to visit His vineyard, to inspect whether His tree is bringing forth blossoms and fruit, not grow angry with me when He beholds that so much care has been bestowed to no avail? Will it not afflict Him to see the hope He placed in me frustrated? Perhaps He has spoken already to His servant, Death: "Tear out the roots of this barren tree. What is its use in the vineyard of the convent? Another shall occupy her place more worthily."... I have deserved this sentence, O my God; for I have not corresponded to Thy fatherly intentions. I ought to have co-operated with

so many graces, and for myself and others brought forth fruits of salvation. Instead of sanctifying the souls of others, I have not even sanctified my own. Oh, how much good a zealous religious would have done in my stead, how many souls she would have sanctified by her zeal, edified by her example, saved by her prayers! Verily, O Lord, if Thou punishest me, and placest another in my stead, I can but exclaim, "Thou art just, O Lord, and Thy judgment is right" (Ps. cxviii. 137).

But deal mercifully with me, according to Thy great mercy, and according to the multitude of Thy mercies blot out my iniquities.

THIRD POINT. "BUT HE ANSWERING, SAID TO HIM: LORD, LET IT ALONE, THIS YEAR ALSO, UNTIL I DIG ABOUT IT, AND FERTILIZE IT. AND IF HAPPILY IT BEAR FRUIT: BUT IF NOT, THEN AFTER THAT THOU SHALT CUT IT DOWN" (Luke xiii. 8, 9).—In His infinite mercy the Lord grants what the vinedresser so ardently asks for the tree: "Another year, Lord, and I will do my very

best."... Who is it that has interceded for me? Is it not you, my dear Mother Mary, aided by my guardian angel and my holy patrons? "I do not doubt," says St. Alphonsus, "that all good comes to us through Mary." My soul, perhaps it is the last grace that she can obtain for you; perhaps she has gone security for you. She will multiply her inspirations and graces, she will procure for you richer means of fruitfulness... But mind, use this time, that which is offered thee; do not disappoint thy Saviour and thy good Mother...

O Lord, what wilt Thou have me do? Speak, Thy handmaid listens. "Renew thy heart and thy spirit," Thou tellest me by Thy prophet (Ezech. xviii. 31). My heart is filled with earthly wishes, disinclined to mortification and self-denial; my mind is distracted, and occupied with all but the one thing it ought to be about: with Thee and the care for my perfection. Yet Thou, O Lord, create a pure heart in me and in my interior renew the perfect spirit (Ps. l. 12). I have

said it: "To-day I begin" (Ps. lxxvi. 11). The devil wants to assure me and make me believe that I have plenty of time to bring forth fruit. Grant, O Lord, that I do not lend my ear to his inspirations, but penetrate my flesh with Thy fear (Ps. cxviii. 120).

And thou, dearest Mother, whose intercession has so often obtained a postponement for me, help me to profit by these tokens of love. Long enough have I been a barren tree; grant that I bring forth fruit, which thy divine Son so justly and ardently expects from me.

Prayer after Meditation.

MARCH.

MEDITATION I.

Our First and Our Last Holy Communion.

First Prelude.—Imagine a richly adorned altar, numerous candles burning thereon as on a first Communion day—then a sick bed and next to it a crucifix between two burning candles, as is usual at the administration of the last Sacraments.

Second Prelude.—Ask for the grace by the remembrance of your first, and the representation of your last holy Communion to be incited always to approach the sacred table as devoutly as possible.

First Point. Our First Holy Communion.—Go back in spirit to that happy day, many years ago, when you were allowed to receive your Lord and God for the first time. Recall to your mind that day and all

the accompanying circumstances. How long we had yearned for that happy hour, and when others, older than we, were admitted to the sacred banquet, we even felt a sort of holy envy. Oh! when would that happiness be ours? At last the happy day dawned. But what made it so beautiful? Not the preparations and the activity at home and in church before the great feast, not the congratulations of the family and friends, not the clothes, the bits of jewelry that were presented to us—no; but that God deigned to descend into our heart, which He had never visited before; that He chose this heart to be a crib in which to rest, a throne from which to rule as a king. Recall likewise the preparation for our first Holy Communion. Days and months of instruction and prayer preceded it. Never did we go more carefully to confession, or take better resolutions for the future than at that time. Our heart was pure, burning with the desire to be united with God. We prayed with great fervor and devotion, our faith was lively, the sensation

of our unworthiness keenly affected us. Was it not that our heart at that time was a well cultivated soil in which all virtues sprouted and blossomed, and of which Our Lord took possession with great pleasure?

When He had come, when we could say at last, "The Lord is mine and I am His," how we thanked Him and entreated Him never to leave us, that we might always remain pure and zealous! How we enjoyed the happiness, the bliss that was ours on that day! Alas, O my God! how shortlived was that happiness!... My Jesus, mercy! Every following Communion ought to have advanced us in the love of God; have we even preserved the love we felt that day? Where is the careful preparation, the hearty thanksgiving of that day? Where the purity of heart that illumined us then? Our Communions have become more numerous, it is true, but as to our devotion, our love—have these increased? Have we progressed in virtue in corresponding to these graces? O my Jesus, Thou art not changed, but I am no

longer the same. Come back, O happy sentiments of my first Holy Communion, and I shall draw with joy from the fountains of my Redeemer!

Second Point. Our Last Holy Communion.—Imagine having reached that period when our earthly life approaches its end and the hour draws nigh when body and soul separate. Do not think of this moment as being far distant, but quite close at hand. I shall be lying on my deathbed, surrounded by my sisters in religion. The candles at the side of the crucifix are lighted, the little bell announces that He who is to judge me approaches to visit me for the last time. My soul, what feelings does the voice of the little bell awake in you? Fear, confidence, love? "Peace to this house, and to all that dwell therein," is said by the priest, and, carried by the hands of His servant, my Lord and God enters. Oh! then grant us peace, O Lord, for there is nobody that fights for us, except Thou, O Lord. Some one says the *Confiteor* in my stead, the *"mea maxima*

culpa" resounds in my ears, for I have sinned much in thoughts, words, and actions, through my fault, my most grievous fault. The priest in the name of God promises me pardon, mercy, and absolution. Will that be a reassurance for me?... Then he shows me the most holy body of the Lord and says, "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world." Oh, then take away likewise my sins, which are so numerous! At sight of eternity, how I shall wish never to have sinned! How I shall wish always to have received Holy Communion with due preparation! "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word and my soul shall be healed." And then the priest says: "Receive, O Sister, the viaticum of the body of Our Lord Jesus Christ, that He preserve thee from evil and lead thy soul to life eternal. Amen." Will not that tepidity in which I now live and with which I so frequently receive the body of Our Lord then fill me with fright, when I remember the judgment seat before which I am to appear

the holiness that I could have attained, but failed to reach, the fruit that I could have brought forth, but have not produced? O Lord, help me to shake off at once this tepidity, in order that I may be at ease then. Concluding, the priest says: "Holy God, almighty, eternal Father and Lord, we ask Thee with confidence, grant, that this our Sister, who has received the most sacred body of Thy Son Jesus Christ, be strengthened thereby in body and soul unto life everlasting." The priest withdraws. Jesus has for the last time visited me, blessed me. The candles are extinguished. The sound of the little bell faintly strikes my ear as yet, then dies away. I am alone with my Jesus. My soul, thank the Lord many thousand times, thy God, thy King and Judge, that His love urges Him to visit thee in this manner, before He enters into judgment upon thee. Oh, how much depends upon receiving Him most devoutly, most worthily at this important transition. Will my sentiments at that moment be better than they are in health?

Will my last Holy Communion atone for all my former tepidity? Being ill, what are we able to do? "As we live, so we die," says St. Augustine. My soul, if at that moment you wish to feel easy, receive every Holy Communion as you received your first one, or as you—lying on your death-bed, in sight of your judgment—would wish to have received it. O Jesus, to-day I wish to receive Thee in this manner. As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul longeth for Thee! Through the intercession of the Most Blessed Virgin, of St. Joseph, of St. Barbara, grant me now, I entreat Thee, that lively faith, that profound feeling of my unworthiness, that sincere contrition, that ardent love, that I should wish to have at the hour of my death.

Come then, O Jesus, come into my heart!

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION II.

Mortification.

First Prelude.—Imagine our dear Lord in any mystery of His holy Passion, in His circumcision, on Mount Olivet, at the column, on the cross.

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace rightly to understand the advantage, yea, the necessity of mortification.

First Point. We Must Not Neglect Exterior Mortification.—Jesus Christ, our Model, accepted and willingly bore not only mental, but also bodily suffering. Remember Bethlehem, Egypt, Nazareth, Calvary! All the saints have loved and practised exterior mortification. Not the holy Church alone, but our Holy Rule likewise prescribes exterior mortification and controls it by wise restrictions. Every man feels within himself a law which is in conflict with the law of God, an inclination, a proneness to evil, which can only be suppressed by mortifica-

tion. This mortification is very meritorious before God. It was this which made St. Peter of Alcantara avow to St. Teresa after his death, "O blessed penance, which merited for me so great a glory." With God we have a great debt to pay off on account of the sins of our whole life, for, forgiven though they may be, they have entailed temporal punishment. What follows from all this for me? That I should deem myself happy if the marks of the cross and the thorns are imprinted on my whole life; that, consequently, I should derive profit from all occasions of dying to my flesh, thus to deaden in me the viper of self-love. Is that not becoming for me? Or can a weak body stand under a head crowned with thorns? How foolish I am to allow so many chances of gathering merit, of atoning for my sins, to escape unavailed. Nature, of course, says: "This speech is hard; who can listen to it!" But grace diffuses such rich consolation over mortification that its bitterness is changed into sweetness!

How have I taken to heart this truth before

now? It remains true great austerities are forbidden from higher motives, but is this restriction not frequently a pretext to grant too great a liberty to my senses? How do I guard my eyes, my ears... my taste... my feeling?... How do I bear exertion and fatigue, early rising, a hard couch, heat and cold, hunger and thirst, fast and abstinence? How, above all, bodily ailments that God sends me?... Illness and weakness which temporarily or perhaps continually trouble me?... O my God, what beautiful occasions for mortification and penance! what sources of merit! what pearls, that I have left ungathered! Forgive me, O my Lord, and grant me the spirit of mortification and penance.

Second Point. Interior Mortification is to be Practised Above All.—Nobody that is desirous of advancing in virtue can neglect interior mortification. Weighty reasons may dispense us from exterior mortifications, though never from interior; all, without any exception, need its practice. All teachers of the spiritual life declare it a

principle that we must love to practise interior mortification, and that in particular which God imposes upon us; as being the most meritorious and most pleasing in His sight. Without interior mortification there is no true virtue; even the most austere exterior penance without it is but a sham virtue, a corpse, a body without a soul. A hundred occasions are daily offered to us for this mortification; in reality the whole religious life is composed of it. We must die to our will—by subjecting it perfectly to the precepts of our Holy Rule and the will of our Superiors—by waging war against our evil inclinations—by choosing preferably that which is against our nature and wounds our self-love the more keenly. We must mortify our intellect, by subjecting our judgment blindly to our Superiors, by not obstinately fighting for our opinion, by curbing our curiosity; further, by never indulging with free will in vain, worldly remembrances, or in totally useless affairs tending to our glory or feeding our self-love; by never dwelling

on thoughts pertaining to injuries or wrong received, or ever giving way to aversion.

We must mortify our heart by regulating, moderating, and keeping within proper bounds the love with which we love creatures and in a certain measure have to love them. That our soul feels a natural repugnance against this is a consequence of original sin, but when we desire to acquire the self-control necessary in order to avoid sin and practise virtue, then this mortification is indispensable. What efforts have I made for its acquisition?

What should I do in case of a choice between two offices, the one agreeable and honorable, the other wearisome and humiliating? How do I bear contradiction, when I deem myself right? How do I conduct myself, if my work does not succeed, progress smoothly; if I am interrupted in an occupation or in prayer; when against my will and inclination I am bidden to change my office or my abode? If my help is changed, or my self-love wounded in any way?

O my God, in all these points I have to accuse myself. But now I lay at Thy feet the firm resolution to devote myself more zealously to interior mortification. Call my attention to it when occasions offer, and grant me the strength to make use of them. Remind me then of the words of the devout Thomas à Kempis: "In as much as thou usest violence to thyself, thou shalt advance in virtue;" and the other passage of Holy Scripture: "If thou give to thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies (Eccl. xviii. 31).

O Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and all ye dear saints, who have so heroically practised mortification, help me to follow your example.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

The Worth of Our Soul.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ saying to His apostles with great earnestness, "What doth it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?" (Matt. xvi. 26).

Second Prelude.—A devout prayer for light rightly to know the value of our soul.

First Point. Our Soul is so Very Precious Because it Was Created to the Likeness of God.—Consider how we, as it were, discover God in ourselves. God is eternal—our soul is immortal; God is wise, the source of wisdom and intellect—we likewise may say, "Bless the Lord, who hath given me understanding" (Ps. xv. 7). God is a pure Spirit, our soul too is a spirit. It is the breath of the Godhead: "He breathed into him the breath of life" (Gen. ii. 7). It is not simply His work, His creature—it is more: it is His likeness,

a beam of His glory. Who shall succeed in describing the glory which sanctifying grace bestows on the soul? Then God unites with it, takes up His abode in it; it is beautiful by His beauty, rich by His wealth, holy by His sanctity. St. John Chrysostom says: "Place next to the sun a soul in the state of sanctifying grace, and the lustre of the sun shall vanish."

O my God, what a dignity! Thus was my soul after the purifying waters of holy Baptism had been poured over it. Yet, if I were to return to my God at this moment? Have I not frequently sullied the nuptial garment by sin, disfigured and darkened the likeness of God, if not totally effaced it?

I am more solicitous for my honor and health than for the beauty of my soul! The least stain on my good name is intolerable; to save my health I willingly submit to take disagreeable medicines. Yet, alas, O my God, how small is the care for Thy likeness in my soul! What answer shall I give when in judgment Thou shalt ask, "Whose is this

image?" (Matt. xxii. 20.) If I but had the same zeal to adorn my soul with virtue as I have to enrich my mind with useful knowledge! Pardon me, O God, all I have neglected until now. Purify my heart and renew within me the right spirit. Give to my soul its lost splendor and grant I may never darken it again by sin.

SECOND POINT. OUR SOUL HAS BEEN RANSOMED BY THE BLOOD OF JESUS CHRIST. —The value of things is rated according to the price that has been paid for them. Oh, how great, then, must the worth of our soul be! Not by perishable gold or silver has it been ransomed, but by the immeasurable price of the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

"O man," a Father of the Church exclaims, "if thou wilt know the worth of thy soul, ask thy God, who has redeemed thee; behold His labors, His sweat, His wounds, His pains, His blood, His death. He shall answer thee, 'So much art thou worth.' One drop of His precious blood has more value

than all the treasures of the world; for thy soul He shed a stream of this holy blood."

If I had but known how properly to prize this great treasure! If I had not trampled upon His holy blood by my sins!

O my God, if the thought of this ransom for my soul fills me with fear concerning the account, it fills me no less with hope. Do not look upon my sins, O Lord, but upon the blood of Thy Son, that He has shed for me. It does not call down vengeance, but grace and mercy. O Jesus, Thou hast offered all Thy blood in exchange for our souls; come to the aid of Thy servants, whom Thou hast redeemed by Thy precious blood. "O Blood of Jesus Christ, how worthy Thou art of our veneration! On the altar Thou art our drink, on the cross our ransom, in heaven our intercessor" (St. Bernard).

Third Point. Our Soul is Destined to Possess God Eternally.—Earthly goods and pleasures can never fill our heart; it is too great for them. St. Stanislaus therefore said, "I am born for something higher."

This higher thing for which we are destined is the possession of God. "I myself," says the Lord, "shall be thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. xv. 1). Here on earth even, God would take possession of our soul, not partly, but wholly. He would rule in it, as on His throne, gradually to unite us to Himself and to make us eternally happy. My soul is indeed to partake of the happiness of God.

Is it, then, right if I divide my heart, my inclinations, my soul, between God and creatures? Is that not highly unbecoming, dangerous even? When God sees that earthly desires after honor, enjoyment, and sensual pleasures fill my soul, He will certainly withdraw from me, for He and the world can not dwell together in one heart. "Our God," says the Prophet, " is a jealous God, who allows no adversary," consequently is it not unaccountable if I sully my soul with the excrement of earthly wishes and cares, destined as it is to shine in the glory of the Godhead for all eternity?

O my God, too long have I done this, but

now I see into my wrong. Pardon me. From now on my greatest care shall be to prepare and adorn my soul for Thy eternal possession. Help me in this endeavor; help me above all to sanctify the work and cares that my vocation imposes. Grant that I use every occasion to acquire merit, for according to the measure of my merit shall I have share in Thee. Place Thyself like a seal upon my heart, that no inordinate love for creatures creep in! Place Thyself like a seal on my arm, that I perform my work singly and solely for Thee, O my God.

Prayer after Meditation.

APRIL.

MEDITATION I.

Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament our Benefactor.

First Prelude.—Behold Jesus in the cenacle before the Last Supper; His countenance beaming with love; He thanks the Father, then says, "Take ye and eat."

Second Prelude.—An ardent prayer to Jesus for grace rightly to know what benefit He bestows on us in Holy Communion and what we ought to give Him in return.

First Point. Jesus Bestows a Great Benefit on Us in Holy Communion.—The circumstances accompanying the institution of the Blessed Sacrament show me the greatness of this benefit. What does Jesus give

us in it? Himself, with all that He possesses; His merits, which are immense; His divine flesh and blood, with which He nourishes and refreshes us; His most holy soul and His adorable Deity. O miracle! O mystery! He, whom heaven and earth can not contain, is pleased to abide in my little, narrow heart!

Who is it here that gives? The smallest gift becomes valuable when a high personage presents it. Here there is no small gift, but the most precious, and God's infinite Majesty presents it to us... O wonderful Gift! O adorable Giver!

O ye holy angels, help us to praise and glorify the Lord. To whom does He give Himself? To man, to His own creature, yea, to all men, even the most miserable, even to me, who am not worthy to serve Him. O wonderful mystery! The Master comes as food to a poor, wretched slave! I should not wonder at Jesus giving Himself only to His saints or His representatives on earth, but even on me, who have not preserved the

garment of baptismal innocence, He bestows Himself. He gives Himself to numberless ungrateful men. At the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament He foresaw all the desecration and profanations that would be perpetrated upon Him in Holy Communion, and nevertheless to these same ones He gives Himself, forgetful, as it were, of His own words: "Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine" (Matt. vii. 6).

When did He give Himself? On the eve of His Passion, the night before He was delivered up to His enemies (1 Cor. xi. 23). It was the redeeming of His promise: "I will not leave you orphans" (John xiv. 18), the last and strongest proof of His love, the continuous commemoration of all that He was to suffer for us on Calvary, on the cross.

"O commemoration of the death of Our Lord," exclaims St. Thomas of Aquin, "O living Bread, that gives life to the world, grant that my soul live by thee and taste all thy sweetness." Besides, He does not

give this life-giving bread only once in my life, but as often as I approach the holy table, the number of my Communions being practically uncountable.

Why does He give Himself to me? Because He loves me. "With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you" (Luke xxii. 15). "It is my delight to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii. 31). "And if I shall send them away fasting to their home, they will faint in the way, for some of them came from afar off" (Mark viii. 3). Have you, my soul, these truths before your eyes? You believe them, whence, then, the little care in preparation and thanksgiving? O Jesus, pardon me. I will do better. "Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief" (Mark ix. 23). Increase the faith of all those that believe in Thee.

SECOND POINT. WHAT SHOULD WE GIVE JESUS? WHAT SHALL I RENDER THE LORD FOR ALL THAT HE HAS DONE TO ME? (Ps. cxv. 12.)—All that we are and have. Yet, O Jesus, what a difference be-

tween Thy gift and ours. O that I knew Thee and knew myself! If we were rich in earthly things, we might offer them to Jesus in token of our gratitude; but, by an unmerited grace of Our Lord, we are called to holy poverty. We possess as yet body and soul, and these at least God requires as a pledge of our thanksgiving. We should give Him our body, by making good use of our senses. Do I use my ears, eyes, and tongue singly and solely for Jesus? Or do these help me to wander away from Him? Further, we should give Him our body by bearing patiently all pain, sufferings, mortification. Our body has daily something to bear through heat or cold, hunger or thirst, ailment or weakness. How do I bear all this? St. Paul says, "Always bearing about in our body the mortification of Jesus, that the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies" (2 Cor. iv. 10).

Our Lord also desires our soul, with all its faculties: our intellect, by a lively, humble faith that in all things seeks, finds, and

honors Jesus. Our will, by a speedy, joyful, simple obedience. Have I given my soul to God in this way? Even if I had given myself in this way, my sacrifice were but small, and I withdraw so much from it to bestow on creatures!

O my God, grant that we belong to Thee wholly at least before our death, that we may be able to appear before Thy judgment-seat without fear. In this intention I will offer my Communion to-day.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION II.

Hope.

First Prelude.—Imagine yourself before the judgment-seat of God, and all your works placed in the scale. Your good works would surely be too light—if the merits of Jesus Christ were not added thereto.

Second Prelude.—An ardent prayer for a firm, steadfast trust in God's goodness and mercy.

First Point. Why Must I Hope?—Because God's goodness and mercy are infinite. Is He not the Father of mercy and of all consolation? Ever so many sinners have hoped in this mercy, and God has not rejected them. He saved David, pardoned Mary Magdalen, opened paradise to the penitent thief, and did not reject Peter after his fall. Would not all of us be past redemption if His mercy were not boundless? O God, Thou canst grant mercy in this world only, for after death Thy justice reigns alone. Pardon me then while there is time; manifest in me the greatness of Thy mercy as later on Thou wilt deal according to the greatness of Thy justice. God is faithful in His promises. Has He not said by the mouth of St. Paul, "God is true" (Rom. iii. 4), and by the Prophet, "Neither will I profane My covenant: and the words that proceed from My mouth I will not make void"

(Ps. lxxxviii. 35)? "Wash yourselves, be clean, take away the evil of your devices from My eyes... And then come, and accuse Me, saith the Lord: if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow: and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool" (Isa. i. 16).

How is it possible to fear after such promises? What dost thou fear, my soul, and why dost thou afflict me? Hope in the Lord, who gives thee such good promises, and to prove the sincerity of His words gives thee a pledge of immense value, His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, and with Him all that thou canst wish and desire! How much hope the only-begotten Son of God has stirred in me! He has instituted the holy Sacrament of Penance and the Holy Eucharist for me, He has worked and suffered and shed His blood to the last drop for me. Oh, if my parents (whether still in this life or already with God) could save me, how assured should I be, knowing their love for me! Yet what is parental love beside that of Jesus

for us? Pardon, O my Saviour, the little confidence I have had until now. Away from me, then, all ye diffident thoughts, I have the Passion of my Jesus, His merits, I am united with Him by my indissoluble vows, and but to-day I received Him into my heart, Him, the Pledge of eternal salvation.

Second Point. How Must My Hope Be?—To be a strengthening consolation, my hope must be steadfast and active. Many hope as long as everything is well with them in this life, but they lose hope at the time of tribulation and darkness. Others hope, it is true, but their confidence is presumptuous, so to say, as they imagine that God, who created us without our co-operation, will also save us without our co-operation. Has it not been so with me sometimes? When Satan, the world, and the flesh endanger the bark of my soul and the waves of temptation threaten to swallow it up, am I not overpowered by anxiety and do I not fear for my vocation, my salvation, just as if God had abandoned me? Where is then my hope

in God's love and goodness, in His infallible promises and in the merits of Jesus Christ? Do I not yield to an inordinate anxiety in regard to my former confessions and pardoned sins? O my soul, God has given you the benefit of a religious vocation, has admitted you to the holy vows,—would this good God, after so many graces and benefits, not have pardoned your sins? It is lack of hope if you do not forget what, according to God's express words, you ought to forget. O God, give me that sweet confidence which does not rest on my own merits, but on Thy love and Thy promises. Be Thou the haven in which the bark of my soul may securely rest...Let it be thus more than ever when I am lying on my death-bed, and am assaulted by the devil, who endeavors to rob me of the hope in Thy mercy and to plunge me into despair...

My hope must also be active, that is, accompanied by good works. For what would it avail if I hoped in God but failed to cooperate with the grace of God? My works

in themselves have no worth; but God, nevertheless, requires them from me, and without them I can not be saved nor become a saint. My soul, hast thou nothing to reproach thyself with on this point?... If thou art faithless in the observance of thy holy vows, of Holy Rule, Office, if deliberately thou dost indulge in venial sins, yet art without fear for thy perseverance and thy salvation, then thy hope is presumptuous.

O my God, at times my confidence is unsteady and weak, at others presumptuous; when will the words of Thy servant Ignatius penetrate me: "Confide in God, as if everything depended on Him, and from your side do all that you can, as if everything depended on yourself."

O my God, grant to all of us this grace!

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

The Happiness of the Religious Vocation.

First Prelude.—Listen with devotion to the mild words of Our Saviour: "Fear not, little flock, for it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom" (Luke xii. 32).

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace to be filled with gratitude and new zeal for perfection by the knowledge of our happiness in being called to the religious life.

First Point. A Religious Vocation is a Happiness Because it Withdraws Us from Many Dangers.—Consider the words which Jesus, full of pity, spoke: "Woe to the world because of scandals" (Matt. xviii. 7). Further, how St. John, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, describes the spirit of the world as "Concupiscence of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and pride of life." How St. Anthony, seeing the whole world filled with snares, exclaims: "My God, how can I be saved?" I was exposed to many of these

dangers. What a happiness to have escaped them and to be safe within the sacred walls of the convent. What would have become of me if I had stayed amidst all those dangers? For, alas, how many times did I not offend God in the short time I was in the world? Perhaps I should be ripe for hell now, or on the road to become so!... I have renounced pleasures of the world, it is true, but instead I enjoy the peace of the children of God, of which St. Paul says that it surpasseth all understanding (Philip. iv. 7). I do not possess earthly goods, which people in the world desire eagerly, yet all the more freely can my heart be raised to God; for St. Bernard says: "When one possesses earthly goods, they load the heart; when one loves them, they stain the conscience; when one loses them, they afflict the mind" (Ep. cv.). I must renounce my own will, but I now walk securely under the sweet yoke of obedience. Do I prize sufficiently my holy vocation and thank God for it every day? Am I perhaps so ungrateful that when difficulties occur I

for He who is mighty hath done great things to me."

Have I sufficiently understood my happiness until now? I could justly doubt it, having fulfilled the duties of my holy calling so carelessly. Yet could God have granted me a greater benefit outside of holy Baptism, than the call to a religious life? St. Thomas of Aquin answers: "No." Does not special glory await me in heaven? "Every one that hath left house or brethren, or sisters, or father or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundred fold, and shall possess life everlasting" (Matt. xix. 29). Has not my soul become the spouse of Christ? He loves me with a special love, and will celebrate with me the celestial nuptials. St. Bernard tells me that in the convent I live more purely, fall less often, rise easier, receive richer grace and shall die more placidly.

O my God, how ungrateful should I be if all these benefits did not move me! Grant that the remembrance of these gifts may

strengthen me in all difficulties and support me when courage begins to fail. Woe to me if after all this I continue lukewarm and slothful! Lord, I do not only entreat Thee to grant that I live in Thy house all the days of my life, but also that I live as behooves a faithful, grateful spouse. Holy Mary, Mother of God, intercede for me with thy Son. Amen.

Prayer after Meditation.

MAY.

MEDITATION I.

Jesus Sought, Found and Kept by Mary.

First Prelude.—Represent to your mind our dear Mother Mary, afflicted at first, then rejoicing—seeking and finding Jesus, and how she on her return to Nazareth never for an instant loses Him from sight.

Second Prelude.—Let us ask Mary that she teach us to seek, find and keep Jesus.

First Point. Mary Seeks Jesus.—Consider why Mary seeks her lost Child so zealously. She knew who He was: the Creator of heaven and earth in the form of a child. She loves Him as her God, her Saviour, and Redeemer, her only Son! She could not be happy without Him, and just because God in her Son had given her all, she

felt as if she had lost all in Him. How do I follow this example of my holy Mother? Faith tells me that Jesus is present in the Holy Sacrament. Do I know Him sufficiently; is my faith lively? Oh that I were deeply penetrated by so much greatness under so insignificant an appearance!... Do I love Him as He desires to be loved by me? He has loved me to excess; He has exhausted the treasures of His love for my sake, and I? O sweetest heart of Jesus, I implore, that I may ever love thee more and more... Do I feel unhappy without Jesus? Alas, do not entire hours, yea days, pass by without a loving thought of His presence? Furthermore, was there perhaps a time in my life when I was entirely separated from Him by sin, although outwardly I seemed to live without remorse?... O dearest Mother Mary, imprint thy example deep on my heart. Thou didst retrace thy steps to seek Jesus—grant that I return to my first zeal. Thou didst shirk no trouble—oh that I may not shirk the trouble of keeping recollected, nor of zealous

preparation for Holy Communion. Thou didst seek Jesus in the Temple—grant that I seek Him there likewise, for I know He is there in the lowly form of bread; I know Him and desire to love Him more and more.

Second Point. Mary Finds Jesus.—Whom does Mary find in the Temple? The Love of her heart, the One that can fill her heart. She found the happiness, the sunshine of her house, which without Jesus would have been dead and desolate. She found the blessing of her life, for on account of this Child she was the blessed among women. O Jesus, hope of those who repent, how kind Thou art to those who ask, how good to those who seek Thee, but what to those who find!

Rejoice, O my soul, for you too have found Jesus. Here in the tabernacle, in your presence, He is really and substantially present. You can say with the spouse in the Canticle: "I have found Him whom my soul loveth," and with holy Church: "O Jesus, how sweet to think of Thee!"

Whom have I found? Him who loves me so tenderly and who alone is worthy of love. "Oh," St. Bernard exclaims, "know ye all Jesus, ask Him for His love, seek Him ever more ardently, for those who taste Him feel a new hunger, those that drink Him a greater thirst; they love nothing, they know nothing, they desire nothing but Jesus their love. I have found Him who alone can give me peace and joy. Without Him every food must be bitter to me, without Him the dwelling of my heart would be dead, desolate and forsaken." "Stay with us, Lord," I beg with St. Bernard; "stay with us—dispel the darkness of our mind... If Thou dost visit us, truth shines like a sun into our soul, then the whole world appears to me, oh, so small, so despicable, and the fire of love glows in my interior." I have found Him who shall inundate me with graces and blessings. Here in the tabernacle are the sources of the Redeemer, and I may draw from them with joy. But a few moments more, and He Himself comes to me, to share with me His

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treasures of grace and blessings. "Hath He not also with Him given us all things?" (Rom. viii. 32.)

THIRD POINT. MARY KEEPS JESUS.—Consider what her motherly care suggests to Mary to prevent losing her treasure in future. She repeatedly looks after Him, keeps Him with her as much as possible—in Jerusalem, on the way home, at Nazareth, everywhere. Rest assured, dearest Mother, Jesus will not leave Thee again until His hour has come. Yet I must do that which Mary did. If presently Jesus descends into my heart, I can say with the spouse of the Canticle: I have Him and I will not let Him go" (Cant. iii. 4). Yet Satan will begrudge me my happiness and make all possible efforts to cause me to forget the presence of Jesus; distracting occupations will add their share. I must, then, in imitation of Mary frequently turn my eyes to Jesus by remembering during the day the happiness of this morning and faithfully putting into practice the resolution taken in presence of my divine Bridegroom.

How have I done this until now?... How do I intend to do so in future?...

Like Mary, I must often converse with Jesus during the day; for even if the holy species are consumed after a few minutes, He remains with His graces. He lives in me, He speaks in me. Do I preserve the words of Jesus in my heart as Mary did?... Jesus, grant that to-day all my words and actions be but an echo of the loving words that Thou deignest to address to me in Holy Communion: "I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me" (Ps. lxxxiv. 9).

O Mary, obtain for my heart compunction and for my eyes tears of repentance that I should have lost Jesus so often by sin. Obtain for me the grace to find Him again and to keep Him for time and eternity.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION II.

Love for Jesus Christ.

First Prelude.—Behold in spirit Jesus Christ, who lovingly addresses thee: "My child, give Me thy heart."

Second Prelude.—"Sweetest Heart of Jesus, I implore that I may ever love thee more and more."

First Point. Jesus Deserves Our Love. —Consider that the first and greatest commandment: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, with thy whole mind, and with all thy strength," applies to Jesus Christ, He being God from all eternity. Of Him, the uncreated Wisdom, there is written: "Riches and honor are with Me, magnificent treasures and justice... I am from eternity, from ages before the earth was made... When God laid the foundation of heaven, I was with Him... Jesus Christ as man is "beautiful above the sons of men" (Ps. xliv. 3). Centuries before His arrival, He

promised to render all those happy in His love who would love Him (Prov. viii. 17). He promised them also the love of His eternal Father: "If any one love Me, he will keep My word, and My Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him" (John xiv. 23). How much He did to gain our love! A single look up to the cross tells us all. The holy Church, His Spouse, says with truth: " My beloved is white and red, and quite lovable. His whole appearance breathes love and requires love in return." His head is inclined, His arms outstretched, His heart pierced, opened. "Truly this love is great," is the exclamation of St. Bernard, "for thus the Lord Himself declares: 'A greater love hath none, than he who gives his life for his friend,' but Thou, O Lord, hast a greater, for Thou hast given Thy life for us, when by sin we were Thine enemies, that we might be reconciled with the Father. We were sold to the devil, Thou hast ransomed us; we were poor in graces and spiritual gifts, Thou hast raised us to a

kingly priesthood; we were sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death, Thou hast enlightened every man that cometh into this world. Heaven was closed to us, He has opened it; we needed food on the long road to heaven, He gave Himself as nourishment."... And should we not love with all our strength so great, so wise, so mighty, so infinitely good and bountiful a King? My soul, do you now understand the words of the Apostle: "If any man love not Our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. xvi. 22). Truly ungrateful are those who are not touched by such love. Must we, the chosen brides of Jesus Christ, not most zealously endeavor to make known His love to the whole world, to enkindle the fire of this love wherever it does not yet burn, and to fan it to flame where it is about to die out? Oh, how much must I deplore the time in which, perhaps, I too lived without love! My God, how could I bear such a life! How I must bewail that this love ever was extinguished in me and—God forbid!—per-

haps glows in me but faintly and weakly, not urging me on to a single sacrifice! Must I not, in sight of the world, in which so many despise the love of Jesus, sigh with St. Magdalen de Pazzi: "Love is not loved! Love is not loved!"

O Jesus, that I could love Thee from now on as Thou deservest! Inflame my heart with love for Thee. Thou deservest as God and as Man to be loved; yes, I must consider it a special happiness, a precious prerogative, that I, a vile worm of the earth, am allowed to love Thee. But Thou desirest my love, Thou threatenest with heavy punishments if I do not love Thee. "O unfathomable mystery!" exclaims St. Augustine. Holy Mother Mary, who hast loved Jesus more than all creatures, grant that my heart burn with love for Jesus, my God!

SECOND POINT. HOW WE SHOULD TESTIFY OUR LOVE FOR JESUS.—To love is nothing else than to wish all good to the beloved. We rejoice in the good and beautiful that we perceive in him, that he already possesses.

Not satisfied with this, we wish to the beloved all the good that he does not yet possess, and we are active in helping him to obtain it. One desires to be in the presence of the beloved, seeks him, wishes to be united with him, and is often occupied with him in thoughts. If love is sincere and deep, one values the beloved more than all else on earth; with us he surpasses honor, possessions, and life, and we should rather lose everything than offend him or keep him from us. Should we happen to offend him, and be it ever so slightly, our heart at once becomes sad and dejected; we ask his pardon and resolve never more to hurt the beloved or become displeasing to him. If others offend him, we feel it as keenly as a personal offence, and become irritated against the offender!

Thus we love men: our parents, brothers, and sisters. But do we thus love Jesus Christ, our Bridegroom, who deserves our love infinitely more than all men? My soul, do you rejoice that in Him you behold the

fulness of the Godhead, with all the treasures of wisdom and beauty and goodness and power that are in God? Do you wish that all men love Him as He deserves? And above all, are you active and zealous with all your strength for the spreading of His kingdom in the souls entrusted to you? It is souls that your Bridegroom longs for, nothing but souls, for He already possesses all else.

Do you rejoice in the Real Presence when kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament?... Is He often the subject of your thoughts? Do you value Him above all in the world, or do you rather attach yourself to earthly trifles? How are you affected when from weakness you offend Him or notice that others offend Him?... Do you at once elicit hearty contrition and a firm purpose of amendment for your own sins, an act of atonement for the guilt of others to offer them to your insulted Friend, Brother, and Bridegroom?

O Jesus, if the love for Thee ought to be thus, how deficient mine still is! From

now on I will love Thee. Often I believed I loved Thee, yet probably I took mere feeling for true love. Help me to love Thee truly. From Thyself this pure, unselfish, noble, self-sacrificing love comes. Grant that with St. Bernard I be able to say: "Only he who has experienced it can believe what it is to love Jesus!"

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

The Religious in Judgment.

First Prelude.—Place yourself in spirit before the judgment-seat of Christ, where your soul will have to appear to give an account of all its works.

Second Prelude.—"O Lord, pierce Thou my flesh with Thy fear: for I am afraid of Thy judgments" (Ps. cxviii. 120). But grant at the same time that this fear be for me "the beginning of wisdom" (Ps. cx. 10).

First Point. What Have I Received?—Jesus Christ says in the Gospel, "Much

will be asked from him who has received much." Be mindful of the great graces with which you have been favored again and again... In the first days of my life I had the happiness of being baptized. From a child of wrath I became a child of God, a Christian, a disciple of Christ. Whom have I to thank that in preference to millions of others I was born in the only saving Church? God and His love alone. I had Christian parents who from earliest childhood taught me to bear the yoke of the commandments of God and of the Church that directed my first steps on the road to heaven. As soon as I had reached due age I received after careful preparation the Sacraments of Penance and the Holy Eucharist. My God, how can I thank Thee for so much goodness? Yet this was not sufficient for Thee. When my passions were aroused, and my faith needed strength, Thou gavest me the fulness of the Holy Spirit of Christ... I was the recipient of many salutary instructions, good counsels, inspirations, and impulses, as well as of

supernatural helps, to leave the bad and accomplish the good, until at last Thou crownedst Thy love by calling me, a poor sinner, to the religious state, choosing my soul as Thy spouse in preference to thousands of others that deserved it more than I. My soul, what will you answer in judgment when the question occurs: "What did you profit by these graces? Where are the gains from so many talents?"... O my God, if punishment met the servant who hid his talent, what shall become of me, who not only have not profited by so many graces, inspirations, and means of sanctification, but have even ill-used them?...

Second Point. What Have I Believed? —In judgment the question will arise, "What have you believed?" Faith must be the rule of our conduct in the world, much more so in the convent. With this measure, this rule, my life shall be compared. This you have believed—that you have done. Will the Judge be in position to say: "You believed the world to be but a transition to eternity

and yet you clung to persons... to things... to places... You believed that the smallest sufferings, the most trifling mortifications would earn an increase of eternal glory, yet you tried to escape them as much as possible. You knew that I am omnipresent, and often you have forgotten Me; you confessed the holy Gospel with all its precepts and counsels, nevertheless you did not follow them. You knew and believed and heard that every venial sin is an offending of the highest Majesty of God that entails purgatory, yet you heaped them up daily, if not hourly."...

My pour soul, what will you answer to these reproaches, to which the Judge will add more? Does this convince you that "faith without works is dead" (James ii. 26), and that the just man not only believes, but "liveth by faith"? (Rom. i. 17.) Oh, then, accuse yourself, have recourse to Mary, that she help you to lead a life which one day can bear the comparison with your faith.

THIRD POINT. WHAT HAVE I VOWED?—What have I vowed as a Christian, as a

religious? This question will likewise occur in judgment.

When for the first time I was carried to church, the holy Church received from me in the name of God three promises. "Do you renounce Satan," she asked me. Through my god-parents I answered, "I do renounce him." "And all his works?" "I do renounce them." "And all his pomps?" "I do renounce them." Holy guardian angel, holy patrons, you were witnesses at that time. O that you never had become witnesses of my later infidelity! Where is the garb of my innocence which I received at that time?... My Jesus, mercy!... Where is the burning candle of God's love that was placed in my hand? How often I have allowed it to be almost extinguished! Where is the mark of the children of God, the seal of the Holy Ghost? How often sin has broken it!... Those vows I solemnly renewed at my first Holy Communion, and this time before numerous witnesses... Have I kept them more faithfully since that time? At last the

day dawned for me when after a long and careful preparation in the novitiate, after a retreat of several days, I knelt at the foot of the altar. My sisters in religion listened to my words, the choirs of angels and saints inclined their ear to earth. The anointed of the Lord stood before me and into his hands I vowed holy poverty, chastity, and obedience. To seal these vows I received the most sacred body and blood of Christ. The angels noted this day in the Book of Life. I had sworn fidelity to my Lord and God and pledged my word to our congregation.... Yet how have I fulfilled this assumed obligation? What shall I answer the Judge if He reproaches me: "You were free to assume this obligation or not, but once assumed, where is your fidelity?"

O my God, pardon me! I tremble before Thy judgments (Ps. cx. 9). Yet Thou who hast heard the penitent thief, Thou hast granted me hope likewise. With all my heart I renew my vows of former days and add the firm resolution to keep them more

faithfully. "I have sworn, and I am determined to keep the judgments of Thy justice" (Ps. cxviii. 106). Pardon the past, O my God. I declare with penitent King David: "And I said, now I have begun" (Ps. lxxvi. 11).

Prayer after Meditation.

JUNE

MEDITATION I.

Spiritual Communion.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself Jesus Christ, who in the Sacrament of His love invites all to come to Him: "With desire I have desired to eat this Pasch with you" (Luke xxii. 15).

Second Prelude.—Implore the grace rightly to know the value and use of spiritual Communion.

First Point. It is Easy to Communicate Spiritually.—Consider that it is a rule of spiritual life not to be satisfied with real Communion on certain days, but to communicate spiritually, besides, and often.

What does it mean to communicate spiritually? It means not only to keep united with Jesus by love and imitation, but, and

above all to express to our God and Spouse the desire to receive Him verily in Holy Communion and to keep most intimately connected with Him. Requirements for spiritual Communion are: a lively faith in the presence of Jesus Christ in the Holy Eucharist, a hearty thanksgiving for the institution of this most holy mystery, a true desire to love Jesus more and more and become more like Him, a sincere contrition for our sins and the desire to communicate if it were possible.

Consider, my soul, how easy it is in this manner to be united with Jesus Christ. You can practise spiritual Communion at any time, not only during Mass or at a visit to the Blessed Sacrament; you do not need the assistance of a priest nor an acolyte—you need not be fasting; no confession is required, nor long preparation. No, my soul, if you say the trouble of it prevents you from practising spiritual Communion, this is a specious excuse and the words of Holy Writ may be applied to you: "If something hard had been

required of you, surely you should have done so, how much rather now" (4 Kings v. 13).

How good Our Lord is to have made it so easy for us to unite ourselves with Him!

Second Point. Spiritual Communion is Most Pleasing to God.—Consider that our desires are the more pleasing to God the holier the end unto which they are directed.

What do I desire when longing for Communion? The holiest that heaven and earth contain—the body and blood of Jesus Christ; His Godhead and humanity—that which through all eternity constitutes the happiness of angels and saints; the union with God, my first beginning and my last end, that which will one day find its continuation in heaven and usher me into an abode of happiness and felicity. I require or I hunger for the Bread of the strong, that shall sustain me on the pilgrim's path; I thirst for the wine that begets virgins, that shall strengthen me against all the assaults of the impure spirit. I desire to be made conformable to Jesus Christ, my Model. "What have I in heaven,

and besides Thee what do I desire upon earth? Thou art the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever" (Ps. lxxii. 25). Must such a desire not be agreeable to God?

A courtier seeks to please his prince, a servant girl her mistress, and should I not seek to be well-pleasing to my Lord, my King and my Spouse by frequently making spiritual Communions? Doing this, I profess my faith in His real presence in the Holy Eucharist, my hope in the fulfilment of His promises, my love and gratitude in the unspeakable benefits of Holy Communion, my contrition for my sins, and the acknowledgment of my unworthiness to receive Him really. What could be more pleasing to Him?

THIRD POINT. SPIRITUAL COMMUNION IS MOST USEFUL TO US.—Consider that God rewards every good work which is done in the state of grace. He gives for it an increase of sanctifying grace and an eternal reward. The Baptism of desire has (concerning original sin) the same effect as Bap-

tism proper—the desire to go to confession, when accompanied by perfect contrition, has the same effect concerning remission of sins, the same effect as actual confession. Likewise, the desire to receive Holy Communion has, as it were, the same effects as real Communion. The soul is nourished, refreshed, strengthened and replenished with graces.

The practice of spiritual Communion will preserve my mind from distraction; I shall live in constant union with Jesus Christ; I shall increase daily in love and shall, moreover, be better prepared for receiving Holy Communion and deriving more fruit therefrom. For Jesus Christ enters a heart that frequently invites Him with special joy, as one friend gladly visits another who has often and pressingly invited him. I shall experience that on my deathbed, when Jesus comes for the last time.

O my Lord and God, Jesus Christ, I admire Thy love and goodness and adore them —I thank Thee for them. I repent of not having been more zealous in a practice so

agreeable to Thee, so useful to me. When in holy Mass the priest receives Communion, when I see my sisters in religion approach the holy table, when I visit Thee in the Blessed Sacrament, when I read or hear about Holy Communion, when on the eve of a Communion day I think of the happiness of the following day, then help me, Thou, O Lord, that I make use of the occasion to express to Thee my desire for Thy entrance into my heart. St. Joseph, St. Stanislaus, St. Catharine of Sienna, who excelled in this holy practice, obtain for me the grace often to make a spiritual Communion. Amen.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION II.

Humility.

First Prelude.—Represent to your mind Jesus Christ pointing to a little child and saying, "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3).

Second Prelude.—Pray for grace to increase in the knowledge, love, and practice of humility.

First Point. What is Humility?—Humility is a virtue by which one despises oneself and desires also to be despised by others. We all have reasons to have a low esteem of ourselves. "Why is earth and ashes proud?" says the Holy Spirit (Ecclus. x. 9). We are nothing of ourselves. God has created us out of nothing, without our co-operation or merit; He might as easily have left us in it. "If any man think himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself" (Gal. vi. 3). Besides, how great is our misery! Our body is weak and subject to many wants; our intellect is limited; our will unsteady and prone to evil; our good works imperfect. We have nothing from ourselves. "What hast thou, that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (1 Cor. iv. 7.) We can do nothing by ourselves. "Without Me,"

says Jesus, "you can do nothing," and St. Paul adds, "not even pronounce the name of Jesus." All our capability is from God.

What humility have I attained? It is easy to speak humbly and lowly about one's self, nay, for a rational being endowed with faith it is hard to think in a different manner about one's self. Yet this is not the virtue of humility. Am I just as willing to be treated accordingly by God and men? If God tries me and sends me one humiliation after another, do I remain quiet and at peace, ready to say, "Lord, I deserve no better"? When I am reproved alone or before others, if evil is said about me, or the respect that my position or merit seems to claim is not paid to me, if I am insulted and offended, do I accept these humiliations willingly? Or do I take refuge in excuses, lies, or inward bitterness? "If thou wilt become humble," says St. Bernard, "do not flee from humiliations, for this is the road to humility." Do my words and actions always aim at the glory of God, or at my own honor, my repu-

tation before men? O Jesus, Thou hast humbled Thyself, hast become obedient even unto death, nay, unto the death of the cross; most humble Jesus, of whom St. Augustine said that he had but to think of Thee in order to know what humility is, make my heart like Thine. Grant that I may glory in nothing but in my weakness and misery, thus to find strength in Thee, my support, my refuge, my salvation in eternity.

Second Point. Necessity of Humility.—Reflect on the following passages of Holy Scripture: "God resisteth the proud, but to the humble He giveth grace" (1 Pet. v. 5). "Woe to you that are wise in your own eyes" (Is. v. 21). "Where humility is there also is wisdom" (Prov. xi. 2). "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, for I am the Lord" (Jer. ix. 23, 24).

Consider likewise the following sayings of the saints: "If humility does not precede

our good works, accompany and follow them, pride will rob us of all merit" (St. Augustine). "The edifice of our perfection must rest entirely on the foundation of humility; the nearer we come to God, the humbler we must be, else we shall see the whole structure tumble down" (St. Teresa). "The more humble we are, the more pleasing is God to work great things through us. The smaller we are in our own eyes, the more grace we receive to move hearts and to educate our pupils to be true Christians" (St. John Bapt. de la Salle).

My soul, how is it that with these considerations thou showest so little zeal to obtain humility? Will I not appear empty-handed before my Judge, notwithstanding my talents and knowledge, unless I earnestly strive after humility?

What is my perfection if it lacks this virtue? It is then without foundation. Without humility will my good works effect the salvation of my neighbor? May I depend on the particular assistance of God, His

grace and His blessing, if I covet my own glory and not His? On the contrary, the Holy Ghost tells me through the words of St. Peter that God will resist me: "God resisteth the proud."

O my God, how much reason have I to acquire the virtue of humility at any cost. Thou, O my Jesus, hast taught it to me by Thy word and example. "Learn of Me," not to work miracles, not to raise the dead, not to create a new world, no, "Learn of Me, for I am meek and humble of heart." O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine. How ashamed must I feel to behold Thee lying in a manger, leading a life of poverty. How abashed when I consider that they accused Thee as a criminal and nailed Thee to the cross between two malefactors. If I compare my conduct to Thine, I needs must confess that under a humble Head I have been a proud member. I know it, Lord; the devil hates humility. That is a reason for me to love it. Satan did not even exempt Thee from his temptation to pride;

I implore Thee apply to me the merit of Thy victory over him, tear out the poisonous plant of pride with its root from my heart and grant me the grace which is promised to the humble.

"To the humble He gives His grace."

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

The Fear of God.

First Prelude.—Place yourself in spirit among the Jews at the foot of Mt. Sinai while amidst thunder and lightning the voice of the Lord resounds: "I am the Lord, thy God."

Second Prelude.—A fervent prayer to obtain the fear of God. Let us speak with David: "Penetrate, O Lord, my flesh with Thy fear."

First Point. We Must Fear the Punishments of God.—Consider devoutly the express admonition of Jesus Christ: "Fear

ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul. But fear him who, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear him" (Matt. x. 28; Luke xii. 5). It is a fearful thing," says St. Paul, "to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebr. x. 31). My soul, what do you conclude for yourself from the above? That you too must fear the punishments of God, for those words are spoken for all men, even for those called by God to His special service. It is true, St. John says that "perfect charity casteth out fear" (1 John iv. 18), but can I say that my love is perfect? As long as that is not the case, I dare not banish fear from my heart. By God's goodness I may cherish the hope of being in the state of grace; hell thus is closed for me. But if a salutary fear of the terrible punishments of the just God pierces me, then the abyss between me and mortal sin will become greater and the danger of my falling into mortal sin will become less day by day; ac-

cording to the words of the Holy Ghost: "The fear of the Lord driveth out sin" (Ecclus. i. 27). Had the foolish virgins possessed more of this salutary fear, they would never have heard: "I know you not" (Matt. xxv. 12).

God does not punish in hell alone. There is purgatory with all its torments. Do I not fear them? Do I consider frequently that there every sin, even the least, is punished, that therefore every untruth, lack of charity, sensitiveness, vanity, and irreverence is, as it were, fuel for this terrible fire? "If Thou, O Lord, wilt mark iniquities, Lord who shall stand it?" (Ps. cxxix. 3.)

Second Point. We Must Fear Offending God.—God in Himself is the greatest Good. Toward us likewise He is infinite Goodness itself. He has loaded us with benefits and proved Himself in every respect a Father to us. Consider, then, what there is about sin. No matter whether mortal or venial, sin always is an offence against God, the greatest Good, the highest wisdom

and power, our blessed Benefactor, our most tender Father in heaven.

Should I not fear to offend so good a God? What evil has He done to me? "My people, what have I done to you, or in what have I afflicted you? Answer Me!" O God, how unfortunate was the time in which I did not fear to offend Thee by mortal sin. Oh that I could recall it. Will I again grieve my Lord and God; strike Him in the face, as it were, by my sins? Will I, a vile, miserable creature, revolt against the infinite Majesty? Lord, rather let me die here at Thy feet. Yet I must avoid even venial sin, because thereby my good God in heaven is offended. Oh, if the fear of God filled my heart, how vigilant I should be to avoid all distractions, how careful in conversation, how humble and conscientious in the observance of my Holy Rules, how faithful in the smallest things, how devout in prayer, in order thus to avoid the shadow of sin, as a good child avoids all that might displease or grieve its father. Oh that I possessed this

child-like fear! It is far more perfect than the fear of the punishment of God; it keeps the soul in a constant yet joyful watchfulness; it nourishes and perfects love; it is about this fear that it is written, "The fear of the Lord is honor and glory and gladness and a crown of joy" (Ecclus. i. 11).

THIRD POINT. WE MUST FEAR GOD HIMSELF.—The fear of the punishments of God, as well as the fear of offending Him, will one day cease. Yet there is another fear of God, to which St. Bernard applies the words of David: "The fear of the Lord is holy, enduring forever and ever" (Ps. xviii. 10).

This is a spirit of holy reverence before God and all that has relation to Him. Truly no people have their God so near as we chosen ones, who have been admitted to His special familiarity. Day and night Jesus dwells with us under the same roof; we are daily present when during the holy Mass heaven opens and He descends upon the altar; we appear before His tabernacle several times a week. He enters our heart in Holy Com-

munion... O Lord, with what intimacy Thou dost treat us; yes, Thou showest that it is Thy delight to be with the children of men, and especially with Thy chosen ones. Yet is not this familiar intercourse an incentive to irreverence toward God? Is my attitude when I kneel before the tabernacle always a worthy, an edifying one? How are my preparation and thanksgiving when I receive Holy Communion?... How do I converse with God, how speak of God?... How do I treat the poor members of Jesus Christ? O my Lord and God, if I must reproach myself in all these points, the cause is this, that Thy holy fear does not penetrate me, daily intercourse makes me forget that Thou art the God of majesty and holiness, who is honored by familiarity, but dishonored by irreverence. The difference between Thee and me is infinite, yet I treat Thee as if there were no difference; and as I would scarcely dare treat my equal. Have I ever received a friend so indifferently and coldly? Yet Thou art the holy One, before whom the

cherubim cover their faces with their wings, and who hath spoken by the prophet: "Cursed be he that doth the work of the Lord deceitfully" (Jerem. xlviii. 10). Holy angels, ye models of holy reverence and esteem, obtain for us that holy fear which does not exclude familiarity, but increases love.

Prayer after Meditation.

JULY.

MEDITATION I.

The Hidden Life of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

First Prelude.—Behold Jesus Christ, when at the Last Supper He speaks the words, "Take ye and eat, this is My body" (Matt. xxvi. 26).

Second Prelude.—O Jesus, hidden God, enlighten the eyes of my faith, that by faith I may behold what my senses fail to perceive.

First Point. Jesus, the Hidden God. —Consideration: Adam and Eve were deceived in paradise through their hearing. They believed the words of the devil and thought to eat life unto themselves, whereas they ate death. In the Blessed Sacrament our senses perceive but ordinary bread, yet our hearing does not deceive us, for Jesus

Himself tells us, "This is My body." Our senses do not perceive Him and our intellect does not understand, for no human intellect can understand how the infinite God, whom the heavens can not contain, disguises Himself under the lowly appearance of bread and wine. There He is hidden even more than He was during His earthly life. Even if His Divinity was hidden to man in the crib, at Nazareth, in Jerusalem, at the pillar, on the cross, yet they beheld His humanity; here both are hidden, Godhead and humanity.

O wonderful concealment! A part of the consecrated Host may be ever so small, yes, scarcely visible to the naked eye: nevertheless Jesus Christ, Godhead and humanity, is hidden in it. Verily Thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour (Isaias xlv. 15). Jesus Christ is like unto a king who for a time lays aside his royal garments to clothe himself not only with lowly, but even miserable garments. What opprobrium such a king will often experience! One does

not know him, another does not want to know him, a third believes him in his hidden form to be a despicable man. All this Jesus experiences in the Blessed Sacrament. There were Jews who pierced Him with their swords and then derided Him: "If Thou art the God of the Christians, prove it." The heretics have thrown Him before dogs and horses, bad Christians have dishonored Him by disrespect and desecration. "O Thou hidden Godhead, I adore Thee! Though Thou hide under these species, my heart at least recognizes Thee. O Jesus, whom I now behold veiled, when will the hour come when I shall be allowed to see Thee unveiled and to be forever happy with Thee in Thy glory!" (*Adoro Te.*)

Second Point. Why Does Jesus Conceal Himself in the Blessed Sacrament?—Jesus conceals Himself here to increase our merits by our faith. If we beheld Him in His glory, how would it be possible not to believe? But how would then the word of the Lord be applied to us: "Blessed are they that have not

seen and have believed" (John xx. 29). It is this faith which, according to St. Thomas, is for us the source of rich merits; it gives us an abundance of spiritual goods here below. For does not Our Lord Himself say, "He that believeth in Me, as the Scripture saith: Out of him shall flow rivers of living water" (John vii. 38)? And St. Peter: "Whom having not seen, you love: in whom also now, though you see Him not, you believe: and believing shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified. Receiving the end of your faith even the salvation of your souls" (1 Peter i. 8, 9). O God, let faith then come to our aid where our senses are insufficient! Jesus conceals Himself out of love for us, to come to the aid of our weakness. For remember that of Jesus Christ, as God, is true what is written: "Thou canst not see My face: for man shall not see Me and live" (Exod. xxxiii. 20). Remember that the Jews could not look at the face of Moses after he had spoken with the Lord—Moses had to cover it with a veil. It is impossible for man now to behold the

Godhead of Jesus: we could not even look at the glorified humanity after His Resurrection, for it is much more dazzling than the face of Moses, brighter and more resplendent than the sun. Since Jesus wishes to stay with us and abide in our heart, He hides Himself under these lowly appearances. If we could behold His Godhead and humanity, we should not dare risk appearing before the throne of His glory. The cherubim tremble before Him and scarcely dare to look at Him —should we miserable creatures have the boldness, we who, besides, have offended Him a thousand times? Lord, if Thou wouldst, then, invite us: "Come to Me all ye who labor and are burdened!" who would have the courage to come? Yet, thanks to Thy love, now I can say with David: "I shall enter in to the Lord, for He hath hidden His countenance" (Ps. viii. 17).

Admire, O my soul, this love untold, and thank thy God as ardently as thou art able.

Jesus hides Himself to give us an example of humility. As a physician combats a dis-

ease with the remedies antagonistic to the evil, so Jesus applies a remedy in direct opposition to our inclinations. Our desires prompt us to appear to shine, to be seen, to distinguish ourselves, to rise higher, be it even in the limited circle of our sisters, or those under our care. Do we not often notice this desire when we perform acts of love or works of charity, when we pray or mortify ourselves? O my poor soul, behold the example which Jesus Christ gives you in the Blessed Sacrament. This Model calls out to you, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure hidden in a field" (Matt. xiii. 44). "Love to be overlooked and despised; no man is secure in appearing abroad, but he who willingly lies hid at home" (Imit. i. 20).

Behold Jesus Christ bestowing love, yea, exhausting Himself in love, but doing so in concealment. He prays here, leads a life of mysterious mortification, but hides Himself. And I should wish to rise, while my Saviour lowers Himself so much?

O my Jesus, hidden God, Thou who art

going to lower Thyself even more by entering my poor heart—make me understand Thy lesson. Oh, how willingly would I prepare in my heart a king's throne, one worthy of Thy Godhead! Render it impossible at least that Thy concealment and humility be for me an occasion for treating Thee less respectfully and lovingly. Teach me, O Jesus, how to prepare myself for my last Holy Communion, which will be followed by the revelation of Thyself. And when Thou shalt reveal Thyself to my eyes in the splendor of Thy glory, grant that I need not be ashamed of not having sufficiently known, honored and loved Thee, the hidden God. Holy Virgin Mary, in whom Jesus was hidden so long, obtain for me this grace.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION II.

Meekness.

First Prelude.—Behold our divine Saviour under the lowly type of a lamb, as the

prophets announced Him and St. John pointed Him out.

Second Prelude.—An ardent prayer for the beautiful and necessary virtue of meekness.

First Point. Jesus Christ Requires Meekness from Us.—Consider how much Our Saviour recommends meekness by word and example: "Learn of Me, for I am meek of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). "Behold I send you as lambs among wolves" (Luke x. 3). "And to him that striketh thee on the one cheek, offer also the other. And him that taketh away from thee thy cloak, forbid him not to take thy coat also" (Luke vi. 29)—rather than by quarreling to lose meekness. Thus Jesus Christ, our Bridegroom and the Lawgiver of the New Testament, teaches. He Himself was meek in His childhood, in His youth, during His public life, among ignorant and sometimes unmannerly disciples, false Pharisees, troublesome sick, obdurate and contrite sinners; yea, among persons of most discordant characters,

qualities, educations, prejudices, views and customs; in a word, amidst surroundings that continually offered Him most numerous occasions for the exercise of meekness. This meekness reached its culminating point in His Passion; when practised toward a treacherous Judas, an insolent Caiaphas, a cowardly Pilate, a sensual Herod, the inhuman executioners, it astonished heaven and earth. What follows from this for me?... If Jesus Christ, by words and example, recommends meekness so much, then its practice must be not only useful, but even necessary for me. O my Saviour, Thou requirest this virtue from me! It is Thy will that I overcome my anger at all times. My surroundings, whether at home, at school, or elsewhere engaged in other works of love, daily offer me occasions for it; yet how do I conduct myself?... I seem to hear Thy voice calling out to me: "My child, you do not know by what spirit you are moved. Do My examples, My often repeated instructions that I give by the mouth of your Superiors,

in My stead, do these not suffice to make you meek?"...

O Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine! Give me at least a holy zeal, an ardent desire to acquire the virtue of meekness.

SECOND POINT. OUR NEIGHBOR REQUIRES MEEKNESS FROM US.—According to the words of St. Vincent de Paul, all men wish to be treated with meekness; nobody likes to be reproved with bitterness and hardness; St. Francis de Sales calls blame a bitter fruit, unpalatable, except if first dipped in meekness.

Remember that you yourself like to be treated with meekness. Ask yourself: "Do I like to be contradicted? Do I like to be corrected with harshness and bitterness?".. Forgive me, O Lord, that I have so often treated others as I do not wish to be treated myself. How often I have forgotten the law inscribed by Thee in the heart of men: "Whatever you do not wish that others do unto you, do not do unto them." How sorry

I am that I have so often acted impetuously! Must I not attribute to this cause the fact that my actions have so little effect; that I have so little influence over souls? By meekness we can direct the hearts of others and mold them like wax—and a Father of the Church says, "Nothing is hard to the humble, nothing difficult to the meek." Is this to be wondered at? Certainly not. Meekness springs from love and pity toward the weakness of our neighbor. What heart can resist love and pity? If the meek admonishes, love speaks from every one of his words; it becomes clear to the neighbor that one means well, and a heart of stone can be softened by the oil of meekness. O God, grant that I understand and fulfil the words of Thy saints: "Meekness makes it easy to rule hearts."

THIRD POINT. MEEKNESS IS NECESSARY FOR US.—If we want to enjoy the love and esteem of our sisters and those in our care, we must be meek. Love and esteem should certainly not be the aim of the practice of

meekness, yet without it we embitter our own life and are not able to work for the salvation of others. How many disagreeable occurrences and disappointments could I have avoided by meekness! And how great a harm have I brought to my own soul by impetuosity and anger! Whenever I have given way to anger, I always have done and said things of which I repent later when in a quiet mood. I have done foolish things, and as the Holy Ghost says, "The impatient man shall work folly" (Prov. xiv. 17). My prayer at such times was distracted and careless; I was deprived of devotion at Holy Communion, for one should approach the banquet of love only with a loving heart. I lacked the contentment that can never dwell amid such turbulent emotions, yet is needed if one is to remain happy in my holy vocation.

O my God and Lord, how ungrateful, un-Christian and foolish I have been by trying so little to subdue my impetuosity! O Jesus, Model of humility, I forgot Thy precept, Thy example, I forgot what St. Chrysostom tells

me: "Look at Christ and you shall be humble at once!" How much good I have neglected, how much evil I have caused! Yet, O Lord, I firmly resolve to do better. I feel that I am inclined to anger, that occasions will present themselves when it will be difficult to govern myself. Strengthen me then with Thy grace; make me remember Thy example, Thy doctrine, Thy promises. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land" (Matt. v. 4). Grant that I, like David, always hold my soul in my hands (Ps. cxviii. 109), to find that rest of the soul which Thou hast promised as a precious treasure to those that are meek of heart (Matt. xi. 29).

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

Jesus Christ, Our Witness.

First Prelude.—Let us place ourselves with great reverence in the presence of Jesus Christ, who is really and substantially present in the Blessed Sacrament.

Second Prelude.—Ask fervently for grace ever to walk in the presence of God.

First Point. Jesus Christ as God is Omnipresent and Witness of Our Actions.—Jesus Christ, who for love of us became Man, is likewise the God of heaven and earth. By this quality He fills the universe with His presence; "for in Him we live and move and are" (Acts xvii. 28). No fish in the ocean is so surrounded by water, no crystal is so imbued with light, as we are surrounded by God and filled with Him. He sees all, His eye penetrates the deepest depths of the earth, the most secret folds of the heart. "O Lord," exclaims David, "Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me; it is high, and I can not reach to it. Whither shall I go from Thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there: if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me; and Thy right hand

shall hold me. And I said: Perhaps darkness shall cover me: and night shall be my light in my pleasures. But darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be as light as day; the darkness thereof and the light thereof are alike to Thee" (Ps. cxxxviii. 6-12). Of Him it is written, "Neither is there any creature invisible in His sight: but all things are naked and open to His eyes, to whom our speech is" (Hebr. iv. 13). "And because He needed not that any should give testimony of man, for He knew what was in man" (John ii. 25). Oh, terrible truth for the sinful soul, but consoling knowledge for the just! God sees my struggles and temptations, my weakness; He hears my sighs, my petitions, my complaints, and my wishes! O God, I know this through my holy Faith; I have been taught this from childhood and I thank Thee for it. Yet, how does it come that I often pass whole hours without thinking of Thee? O Lord, come to the aid of my weakness!

Second Point. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is Our Witness in a Special Manner.—By a miracle of kindness and love Jesus Christ has made this house His abode. His mild eye watches me, wherever I am, whether I work or rest, converse or pray, or recreate. His all-seeing eye, penetrating the doors of the tabernacle, follows me, is continually directed to me, as if I alone sojourned within the quiet walls of the convent. And if in the evening I close my eyes, Thou, O my Jesus, dost not close Thine; Thou watchest over me, Thou seest me, Thou art attentive whether my first and last thought is of Thee. When I approach Thy tabernacle, I ever find Thee ready to listen to my petition. Thy ear is ever open to the voice of my call, that from the depth of my misery cries to Thee. In Holy Communion Thou descendest into my heart to be witness of my love and zeal. O most loving God, omniscient witness of all my actions and omissions, oh that Thou hadst never seen anything in me to afflict Thee! Would that Thou

hadst always seen me recollected, seeking only Thee in all things, charitable to my neighbor, meek and humble, pure in thoughts and actions, zealous in prayer, and penetrated by holy reverence in Thy presence. Pardon, O my Lord and God, the affliction that I have caused Thee in the Blessed Sacrament by the sight of my infidelities. O God, have mercy on me, a poor sinner!

THIRD POINT. WE MUST ALWAYS WALK IN THE PRESENCE OF GOD.—"Walk before Me and be perfect" (Gen. xvii 1). Thus the Lord spoke to Abraham, as if He wished to say: "Remember that I, thy Lord and God, have My eye directed on thee, that thou shouldst not sin, but daily approach that perfection which thou perceivest in Me!" God sees me! Jesus Christ sees me! This thought should never escape my mind. The saints always had this truth before their eyes. O God, how far I am from this! Yet how many sins and imperfections have been caused by this neglect! Alas, if an infidel, or one of another creed, who does not know

human weakness saw my imperfections and faults, would he not think that my heart does not believe the words of my mouth? God *sees* me! God *sees* me! Thus the just Joseph thought when Putiphar's wife wanted to seduce him to sin: "How can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God?" (Gen. xxxix. 9.) God sees me. Thus thought chaste Susanna, when in her anguish she exclaimed, "It is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord" (Dan. xiii. 22). Thus I must think when Satan tempts me, when less perfect sisters want to prevail on me to transgress the Holy Rule, when tepidity and laziness threaten to take possession of my heart, when kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, I dream away the time without giving myself earnestly to prayer and meditation. Yea, my eye ought to be constantly directed to this truth, like that of the Jews to the fiery column, that I may know whither to direct my steps and how to arrange my actions.

O good Jesus, "make Thy face to shine

upon Thy servant and teach me Thy justifications" (Ps. cxviii. 135). Let Thy light enlighten me as the light of the sun whose presence I always feel even though it hides behind the clouds. Then I shall go from virtue to virtue (Ps. lxxxiii. 8) and in some measure fulfil the words which Thou hast spoken: "Be you therefore perfect, as also your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v. 48).

Prayer after Meditation.

AUGUST.

MEDITATION I.

Behold I Come Quickly (Apoc. xxii. 12).

First Prelude.—Place yourself at the side of Mary and Martha expecting Jesus.

Second Prelude.—A fervent prayer always to prepare worthily for the reception of our divine Saviour.

First Point. Who Comes to Me?—Remember the infallible truth of our Faith that Jesus Christ is present in the Blessed Sacrament, Deity and humanity, body and soul... that same God of Majesty is ready to come to me!... He asks admission to my heart, He knocks at the door, looking through the window, looking through the lattice, and says, "Open to Me, My sister, My spouse" (Cant. v. 2). He who comes is the immortal King of eternity, who will one day judge me, who will open for me the gates of heaven

or cast me out among the damned. He is my *Creditor,* with whom I have contracted an infinite debt; my *Master,* who has imposed upon me the sweet yoke of His commandments and counsels, and who has promised me an eternal reward; He is my *Teacher,* Himself the Way, the Truth, and the Life; He is my *Friend,* whose fidelity is eternal and whose friendship He sealed with His blood; He is my *Brother,* who, although the Son of God, adopted me to be His co-heir.—He is my *Bridegroom,* who hath said, "And I will espouse thee to Me forever: and I will espouse thee to Me in justice and judgment, and in loving kindness and in tender mercies" (Osee ii. 19). "Being the Heir of the richest Father, who, being rich, became poor for our sakes, that through His poverty we might be rich" (2 Cor. viii. 9). He is the most loving Physician, who truly hath borne our sufferings and hath taken upon Himself our malady, that we may be healed through Him. O Jesus, how can I express my love, my admiration for Thee! O my Judge, my Creditor, how

can I worthily receive Thee!... "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof"... Oh, make me less unworthy by infusing into me feelings of sincere humility.

Second Point. To Whom Does Jesus Come?—O my son, you can not abase yourself sufficiently before Him who is about to come to you. Lord, would that I knew Thee, would that I knew myself! Who am I that Thou, O God, comest to me? "What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" (Ps. viii. 5.) The King comes to His lowest subject. By my infidelity I have contracted with Him an infinite debt. O my God, dost Thou not see that I possess not a farthing to pay my infinite debt of ten thousand talents? Depart from me, for I am a sinful man. The Lord and Master comes to His slave, and to what a slave! Oh, how often I have shaken off the sweet yoke of Thy commandments, have broken Thy sweet bonds, and by my actions at least have said, "I will not serve Thee." Lord, do not come to me to punish me as I

deserve! Jesus, my *Teacher,* the Wisdom of the Father, comes to me, His lowest disciple! Very seldom do I listen to His words. He wants to instruct me, yet my distracted mind is soon turned away from Him by other thoughts. Lord, is it possible that Thou dost not turn away from me? I must wonder still more when I consider that He comes as a friend to me who have so often treacherously betrayed Him and preferred the miserable friendship of creatures to His. Lord, canst Thou still harbor feelings of love and friendship toward those that betray Thee? Indeed, Thou didst manifest them in the Garden of Olives, and to-day Thou dost so again. He comes to me as my *Brother.* Dost Thou not know, O Lord, that I am Cain, who murdered Thee, the innocent Abel, by my sins? My soul, dare you consider yourself His spouse? Oh, how often I have withdrawn my heart from Jesus Christ and inclined it toward creatures! I am poorer than Lazarus covered with sores and wounds before the door of the rich man.

Alas, I should feed on the morsels that fall from the table, so great is my misery. Like unto the traveler that went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, I too lay wounded and robbed on the wayside; I am blind and surrounded by darkness, I am neither warm nor cold, causing disgust to my Lord... Yet He comes to me, and yet He wishes to enter my poor dwelling! A thousand times more than St. Peter, I have reason to exclaim: "Lord, depart from me, for I am a sinful man! O Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst come to me."

THIRD POINT. WHY DOES JESUS COME TO ME?—If I consider my misery and abjection, fear fills my soul. As the debtor, at sight of his powerful creditor, is struck by the thought: he comes to demand payment; as a runaway slave in sight of his master trembles at thought of punishment; as a traitor tries to escape the glance and the revenge of a betrayed friend; thus I should fear the arrival of Jesus. O Lord, I tremble and am shaken before Thy face. Yet, why

fear, my soul? "Why art thou sad, O my soul? and why dost thou trouble me?" (Ps. xli. 6.) Dost not hear how Jesus in the sacred Host calls out, "It is I, be not afraid" (John vi. 20)? Certainly He comes as your King and Creditor; yet not to sell you, nor to take away all that is yours, but to assure you that all is remitted, forgiven and forgotten. He comes as Master and Teacher; not to punish you, but to lead you to Himself with a gentle hand, and to instruct you anew in the ways of truth. He will not reproach you for having abandoned His friendship; no, He will press you to His heart, as if He had found a treasure. He will not be separated from you as from a faithless bride, but will again unite Himself with you and promise you fidelity, He that never broke it. He comes not to disinherit you, although you have deserved it, but to give you a rich, overflowing measure of graces. My soul, what more do you wish? He comes as the merciful Samaritan, to take care of your wounds, pour oil and wine into

them, to nurse you until you have recovered from all your hurts; His light shall dispel your darkness and destroy your tepidity like an all-devouring fire, that He may henceforth possess you sole and undivided.

O Lord, come, then, to me! "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O my God. My soul hath thirsted after the strong living God; when shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. xli. 2.)

O Lord, come, yes, come! Come especially as my Redeemer, my Brother, my Bridegroom, and my Physician, when the sufferings of my last illness shall bring me to the threshold of eternity. Oh, then heal the wounds of my soul, remit to me the debt of my infidelities that may still oppress me! Help me also to receive Thee now in that disposition which I wish to have in that last, all-deciding moment, that Thy last entrance into my heart be for me the richest in grace and happiness.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION II.

Jesus, Zealous for Souls.

First Prelude.—Behold Jesus Christ when speaking these words: "For the Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost" (Luke xix. 10).

Second Prelude.—Let us beg Jesus Christ to grant us a glowing zeal for souls.

First Point. Jesus Christ, Zealous for Souls in His Public Life.—Consider how Jesus Christ sacrifices the most tender affections of His heart by separating from His beloved Mother, leaving solitude to devote Himself to public life, and all the inconveniences and fatigues connected with it. He patiently bears with the troublesome multitude who seek instruction and healing from Him and do not leave Him a minute's rest. We never hear Him complain. After having spent the day in fatiguing work, He received at night Nicodemus, who from human respect does not venture to approach Him in day-

time to be instructed by Him. How fiery is the love of Jesus for souls! What a zeal for their salvation! Behold Him when, fatigued after the journey, He sits at Jacob's Well to convert a poor sinner. He takes hold of every occasion to teach and to save... We must imitate this holy zeal of Jesus; our calling imposes this duty on us. By this zeal, above all, can we prove our love for God. "If you love God," says St. Augustine, "cause others to love Him." To become a useful instrument in the hands of God I must first and above all sanctify myself. I must give an edifying example to all that come in contact with me. No sacrifice should be too great when there is question of furthering the salvation of my neighbor. What could be more sublime than promoting the knowledge and love of God in the hearts of little ones. To walk beside them, as it were, as their guardian angel, to preserve them from sin! How many children would one day ascribe their salvation to my care and vigilance, if I burned with zeal for souls.

But is that so in my case? Or is it sufficient for me to instruct the children in secular knowledge, while I show no care for their eternal welfare? O Jesus, Lover of souls, who hast devoted Thy whole self to their welfare, grant me that zeal which is ready for all things when there is an opportunity of showing Thee love by winning souls for Thee!

Second Point. Jesus Full of Zeal for Souls in His Passion.—If Jesus was full of zeal for souls during His whole public life, He manifested this specially during His bitter Passion. He had come down to earth to suffer and die for us. His Passion was continually before His mind; He often spoke of it and longed for it. Yet, what a Passion did He approach! Consider that long chain of humiliations, insults, and sufferings! Consider His appearance, His tears, the drops of His precious blood! All His wounds, every drop that He sheds, His last breath, the piercing of His holy side—all exclaim to us: "I love thee, I long for thee. I suffer

all this to save Thy soul, to make it eternally happy with Me in heaven." "Yes, it was this thirst," says St. Augustine, "that consumed Christ on the cross!" If I possess true zeal for souls I must imitate my Saviour in His love for suffering! I, too, surely meet crosses and difficulties in my office or my charge; the more joyfully I bear them, the more surely I can count on God's blessing to be amply poured over my work. If I want to labor successfully for the salvation of my neighbor, if I want to co-operate effectively in the conversion of sinners, I must love suffering. If God visits me with sickness, if my best intentions are misunderstood, if God allows temptations to assail me—behold, all these are means whereby I can save souls. It will always remain true that to further the welfare of souls as well as to sanctify ourselves we must suffer, we must suffer much. Who would, then, allow himself to be depressed by suffering and difficulties! O Jesus, grant me a share in Thy holy zeal, and also in Thy love for suffering.

THIRD POINT. JESUS ZEALOUS FOR SOULS IN THE BLESSED SACRAMENT.—In the Blessed Sacrament Jesus is ever and always the great Zealot of souls. For their salvation He daily descends a thousand times on the altar, as once He descended into the virginal womb of Mary. In His holy tabernacle He awaits all, sinners and just alike. With friendliness He invites them to come to Him. He offers them His merits, His intercession, His mediation, to be at their disposal. As in heaven, He always pleads in our favor. There is no minute in the day or the night when He does not send up a prayer, a sigh to His heavenly Father for the welfare of His holy Church, the conversion of sinners, the perseverance of the just. Not every one is called for direct participation in instruction and education of youth or other works of love; but there are other means within reach of all of working successfully for the salvation of souls. I can offer up to God in this intention my daily work and occupation, the crosses and troubles of life. Thus I

share in the merits of my sisters and draw down God's blessing on their activity. One of the most effective means, however, to win souls to heaven is and always will be prayer. Some must work in the vineyard of the Lord, others must pray that the dew of heaven cover and saturate it. God wills that some devote themselves to the instruction, the education of children, others to the care of sick; yet it is He Himself whose grace must touch their hearts, and this grace will always be the fruit of prayer.

Divine Saviour, since I know by Thy words and example that nothing rejoices Thee as much as the happiness of souls, I take the firm and irrevocable resolution to participate in the sublime work of saving souls by all the means at my disposal, especially by good example and fervent prayer. Bless this resolution, and give me strength and grace to fulfil it to my death.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

Mutual Forbearance.

First Prelude.—Behold Jesus Christ surrounded by His apostles. The one grieves Him by overbearing pride, the other by childish questions, a third by inconsiderate zeal, another again by falsehood. He bears with them all.

Second Prelude.—Revere the lovable sentiments of the Lord and ask Him for grace to imitate Him in all things.

First Point. Forbearance is a Necessity of Charity.—Love and forbearance are inseparably united. We must bear with those we love, for every one has his weaknesses and defects; in heaven alone there is not this necessity. Of course, it is not hard to have intercourse with angels, or men without obvious faults, but it yields little merit. Every one has his peculiar way; his inclinations and characteristics are different from our own; his conceptions and views are often directly opposite; the direction, most

likely, of the will may be extremely divergent. Forbearance is, therefore, absolutely necessary if many should be one heart and one soul; without it concord of hearts, peace, is as little possible as the union of fire and water, of light and darkness. Daily experience teaches me this sufficiently. Should I, then, not be willing to yield to the unavoidable? Shall love, this gift of heaven, be driven out from my surroundings through my fault? It has been banished out of the world and justly seeks a place of refuge in the convent. Shall it be driven hence likewise? How do we, then, fulfil the command of the Lord: "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John xiii. 34)? The fulfilling of this commandment is the distinctive mark of the disciples of Christ: "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another." Will not the blessing of God depart from our house when love leaves it? Our God is a God of love and peace, who can not abide where disunion and quarrels dwell. Have I heretofore con-

sidered forbearance as the source of peace and love? Or was I sensitive like the plant that at the least touch curls up its leaves, to show itself hurt, as it were?... Perhaps this is my usual way of acting. How does this agree with the urgent exhortations to love that my Holy Rule gives?... We must bear with one another with patience and love, adapt ourselves to the moods of our sisters and be indulgent toward their imperfections and foibles. This is the principal means of preserving harmony and love.

Second Point. Forbearance is a Demand of the Divine Law.—Remember that it was not sufficient for God to recommend forbearance, but that He caused these words to be written in Holy Scripture: "The learning of a man is known by patience: and his glory is to pass over wrongs" (Prov. xix. 11). He made forbearance a duty for all Christians, especially for all religious. He has repeatedly commanded it, foreseeing how hard the practice of this virtue would be for many. "Now we ought to bear the infirmities of the

weak" (Rom. xv. 1). Bear ye one another's burdens; and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ" (Gal. vi. 2). "Be ye kind one to another; merciful, forgiving one another, even as God hath forgiven you in Christ" (Ephes. iv. 32). Thus the Holy Ghost speaks by His apostles. Jesus Christ Himself commands forbearance, and there is no cause that can exempt us from this command. If you forgive men their sins, your heavenly Father will forgive your sins likewise; but if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts, neither shall my heavenly Father pardon you (Matt. xviii. 35). Remember, my soul, that these are words of the eternal Truth, of Jesus Christ, who is faithful in His promises and likewise in His threats. With the same measure I deal out, it shall be meted back to me. O my God, is it then possible, that bearing these truths in mind, I should be fault-finding? Thou hast to bear so much from me every day, yea, every hour, every time I commit sin, yet Thou bearest with me. Once,

however, O my soul, the Lord will have to fulfil His threat; then the words of St. Chrysostom will be applicable to you: "If thou dost not bear with thy neighbor, how can God tolerate thee?" A thousand talents have been remitted to us, and should we not remit a trifle and let it pass as if unnoticed? How can I so often repeat: "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us"? What assurance the consciousness of having been forbearing will bring us one day! Lord, I have failed in many things, yet I trust and rely on Thy word. I will become forbearing, and indulgent and yielding; bear with me, then, now and in eternity.

THIRD POINT. FORBEARANCE IS REQUIRED IN JUSTICE.—Every one has his weaknesses—I surely am not free from them. I desire, like all men, that others bear with me, but would it, then, not be a great injustice if I were unwilling to bear with others? We complain about the imperfections of another. Have we not some of our own? Their character, their mood does not please us.

Have we not humors ourselves? Our neighbor is angry, is irritable, excitable; do no angry words ever escape us?... That sister always has a thousand excuses for her wrong; she never yields. Is not the same true of me? Yea, have we never so far forgotten ourselves as to deem ourselves better than another?... "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her" (John viii. 7). It is very unjust to demand of others what we ourselves do not give; to demand our right of others and to neglect doing our own duty. Must I not ascribe to this state of things the fact that I do not enjoy as much esteem from my sisters as I should like to enjoy?

O my God, I thank Thee for Thy forbearance with me. Grant that I follow Thy example. And if love, Thy command and justice do not move me, let at least Thy threats prevail on me... From now on I will try to bear all with a joyful heart, that thou mayst be an indulgent Judge to me in judgment.

Prayer after Meditation.

SEPTEMBER.

MEDITATION I.

Thanksgiving after Holy Communion.

First Prelude.—Let us imagine ourselves in the house of Elizabeth at the moment when Mary enters. Hear Elizabeth exclaim: "Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" (Luke i. 43.)

Second Prelude.—Ask for the grace to make good use of the precious time after Holy Communion.

First Point. The Duty of Thanksgiving.—The moments after receiving Holy Communion are the most precious of my life. Faith tells me that Jesus Christ has entered my heart, He, the Son of the living God, the immense, the Creator of the world, the highest Master and Lord of all things, my future Judge; that He has come to me,

a poor lowly creature, not worthy of His attention, a poor sinner that has more than one reason to tremble before the God of sanctity; yet when this great King and Lord comes to me, is it not becoming and just that all the faculties and powers of my soul should center about Him, should keep Him company, should do Him homage, should converse with Him and listen to Him? Memory, understanding, and will, all should do homage to the Creator. "Bless the Lord, O my soul: and let all that is within me bless His holy name" (Ps. cii. 1). Would it not be a great irreverence to leave such a guest alone in the interior of my heart, while occupying myself with something else? Would I dare treat a friend or a person of high rank thus? O my Jesus, pardon me that so often I have showed less reverence and consideration to Thee, my Lord and King, than to an ordinary person.

What does gratitude ask of me? Never can I lack cause for gratitude. "Behold," says St. John, "what manner of cha-

rity the Father has bestowed upon us" (1 John iii. 1). He nourishes us, not like His people in the desert, with the manna from heaven, but with the flesh and blood of His only-begotten Son. The Israelites "did eat manna and are dead." "He that eateth this Bread, shall live forever" (John vi. 59). The Son of God Himself has atoned for my sins by a life of hardship and sacrifice, in the Garden of Olives, at the column of flagellation, on the dolorous way to Calvary, and on the wood of the cross where He expired amidst excruciating pain. All this He suffered, not because He was forced to, nor for any advantage for Himself, but solely and singly for love of me. It was not enough for Him to open heaven for me by His sufferings, and as it were, to lead me by His hand, but He instituted as a memorial of His suffering and for my support the Blessed Sacrament, in which He desires to dwell among us and enter into our hearts as divine Food. O my soul, "as often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall show

the death of the Lord, until He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). Thank Him for all this, in union with all angels and saints of heaven, for now is the time to exclaim with St. Paul, "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. ix. 15). What does my own clear interest tell me? After Holy Communion I have Jesus Christ, God—within me. I own Him. My soul, how canst thou understand this? The poorest one owns the richest. The weak one possesses the Source of all might and strength. The sick one the mightiest Physician, who gives Himself as a remedy which bestows immortality. After Holy Communion we can ask Jesus more ardently to penetrate us with His spirit, to fill us with His love. He too is then more inclined to enlighten thee, my soul, to spur thee on to good, to strengthen thee. To leave unused the precious time after Holy Communion is the act of a fool who might take riches with full hands out of the treasury of the king, but will not trouble himself to do so.

Second Point. How Our Thanksgiving Must Be Made.—We must incite ourselves with all possible ardor to adore Jesus Christ, who rests in our hearts, to thank Him, to give ourselves entirely to Him, and to ask Him for graces for ourselves and for others. Therefore, adoration, thanksgiving, offering of myself, prayer for grace, are what Jesus desires of me after Holy Communion. Is He not just in desiring this? Is He not the God of heaven and earth, whose adorable majesty constitutes the happiness and delight of the angels and saints? "I adore Thee, hidden God—to Thee do I submit my entire heart, for meditating upon Thee, it is entirely lost in admiration." Does not Jesus show me the greatest of all benefits by giving Himself to me? Although He is all-wise, He could not think of anything better; although He is immensely rich, He does not possess anything more costly; and although He is almighty, He could not give us anything greater. "What shall I render to the Lord, for all the things He hath rendered

to me?" (Ps. cxv. 3.) He gives Himself to me entirely, His Godhead and Humanity, His body and His soul. Is it, then, not becoming and just that I too should give myself to Him entirely, with all that I have and am, and that not only after Holy Communion, but throughout the whole day, yes, all the days of my life? Must I not place at His feet the best resolutions, promising Him to fight more earnestly against my predominant passion, to be more punctual and conscientious in this or that point of the Holy Rule; to be more zealous in acquiring that virtue which I make my special solicitude; to be more generous in all that requires struggle and sacrifice?

And, then, my prayer! When can the word of Our Lord, O my soul, be better verified than after Holy Communion? "If you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it" (John xvi. 23). Then Jesus prays in thee, with thee, for thee; thy petitions become His. "You shall draw water with joy out of the Saviour's fountains"

(Is. xii. 3). O my God, O Jesus, grant that I may understand the value, the power, yea, the almightiness of this prayer!

Accept, then, O God, my resolutions, upon which I implore Thy blessing, through the intercession of Mary. Thanksgiving shall from now on be the object of my particular attention. I will make the most of the precious moments after receiving Thy divine flesh and blood... Often during the day I will call to mind the great grace conferred on me in the morning, and when kneeling before the tabernacle this shall be my first thought. I will put into practice the good resolutions I made when united to Thy Divine Heart. Holy Mary, Mother of God, obtain for me some of those emotions which filled thee when receiving thy divine Son after His death in Holy Communion.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION II.

Prayer.

First Prelude.—Behold Jesus saying to His apostles: "We ought always to pray and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1).

Second Prelude.—Ask for the grace to understand the necessity of constant prayer, and to know the means to obtain it. "Lord, teach me to pray" (Luke xi. 1).

First Point. Why Must We Pray Constantly?—Consider that no duty has been expounded in the holy Gospel oftener and more impressively than the necessity of having recourse to prayer. "We ought always to pray and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1), are the words of Jesus, our highest Lawgiver. "Ask and ye shall receive" (Matt. vii. 7). "Pray without ceasing," says the Holy Ghost through the mouth of the apostles. "In all things give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus, concerning you all" (Thess. v. 17). In many other passages Our Lord repeats the same admonition, and

makes use of the most striking parables. The saints likewise insist on the duty of prayer. St. Augustine says, "In all that thou beginnest, invoke God first, thank Him, and when thou hast finished thank Him likewise." "Whoever prays shall be saved, who does not pray shall be lost" (St. Alphonsus). All these words of the saints were spoken for me. If heretofore I have not prayed constantly, I must make use of the means of correcting myself in this regard. But why shall I pray constantly?

First, to escape the numberless adversities of body and soul that constantly threaten every man, especially the greatest misfortune —an unhappy death. "Every day," says St. Chrysostom, "we strike many rocks which could cause our shipwreck," and Jesus Christ Himself says with all stress: "And take heed to yourselves, lest perhaps your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting... and the cares of this life and that day come upon you suddenly. Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times."

Second, to obtain the assistance of heaven: it is indispensable to salvation, for to be heard, according to the words of the Lord, we must pray constantly and not grow lax. Thus did that widow who by her constant entreaties moved the wicked judge to obtain justice for her. "He told them a parable about this, that we ought always to pray and not faint" (Luke xviii. 1).

Third, to be able to perform every good work in the manner God desires of me. "Prayer is the principal sinew of the soul," says St. John Chrysostom. From the moment that this sinew is cut or weakened, one can no longer walk the way of virtue; he will be limping, like Jacob, and his whole life will be a chain of faults and weakness. Whoever holds the staff of prayer in hand will not stumble, and should he even stumble once, he will not fall to the ground.

Our vocation being a vocation of love, we must ask for all this not only for ourselves, but for all those souls that can partake with us of the glory of heaven... O my soul, can

you ever lack subject-matter for prayer? Can you thank God sufficiently for allowing you, a poor lowly creature, to raise hands and heart to Him in prayer?

Second Point. How Must We Pray Constantly?—Is it not impossible even for a religious to pray constantly? Consider that we can pray in a threefold manner. First, by conversing with God orally or mentally; secondly, by working for God, thereby changing our work to prayer; thirdly, by being ready to return to prayer as soon as our exterior occupations allow. I ought to be in one of these three dispositions at all times. Is this actually the case with me? If the time for meditation has come, do I let it pass unused? Do I shun the trouble which a good meditation causes? Ah, if I do not use well even these moments, how will the other time of the day be? How do I recite my Office, my rosary? Can I really call their recitation a prayer, and a conversation with God? Or can I apply to myself the words of a saint: "How can you wish that God

understand you, since you do not understand yourself?" Do I work in the presence of God? Do I offer my occupations, mental as well as physical, repeatedly to God, and do I renew the good intention made at morning prayer? Do I seek to sanctify my work by frequent ejaculations, thus keeping my mind in union with God? The Ven. Louis de Ponte was accustomed to repeat almost incessantly: "For Thee, my God, for Thee." Thus he prayed uninterruptedly, whatever his occupation might be. How easily I could acquire this habit; how it would strengthen me in temptation, fill me with courage in dangerous circumstances, against all obstacles of virtue! This does not surpass my strength; others could do it; why not I?

Am I ready to return to prayer as soon as possible? In this respect I ought to resemble a miser whose mind is always occupied with money, in the daytime, during the night, at rising and at retiring? Eagerly he seizes every opportunity to earn something, be it ever so little. What a shame for me!—

prayer should be the passion that governs me, the center to which I continually return. Is it so with me? How do I employ my leisure moments? On beholding a crucifix or a picture of devotion in the convent hall, is an ejaculation on my lips? These objects have not been placed on the walls merely as ornaments, but to spur us on and to encourage us. Is the thought of meditation my last one in the evening and my first one on awakening? When the bell summons me to prayer, can I say with an upright heart: "I rejoice in this that was told me, we shall go to the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxxi. 1)?

O God, grant me this spirit of prayer, teach me how to pray. Help me to recollect my distracted mind, that when my lips speak to Thee, my heart may remain with Thee, that I may ever act for Thee and with Thee. When shall I ever be so happy as to reach this goal? O Lord, if I am a religious and do not possess the spirit of prayer, I disappoint Thee, cheat the world and myself, and have no claim to the name of a religious;

my activity is without fruit, my vocation is in danger. Ye holy apostles, whom Jesus Himself instructed in prayer, obtain for us the grace to pray always and not to be remiss.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

Perseverance.

First Prelude.—Behold Jesus Christ as He says to His disciples: "He that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. x. 22). Let us imagine we are these disciples.

Second Prelude.—An ardent prayer not only to persevere in the state of grace, but in zeal and love.

First Point. Necessity of Perseverance.—Recall the happy disposition in which you were at the end of the yearly retreat... What zeal—how many good resolutions!... If I would put them all into practice, what a splendid reward would be mine!

Without perseverance they are all null and void. Either I must persevere in zeal or I must renounce the reward which has been prepared for a zealous religious. I have only this alternative. "Perseverance," say the holy Fathers, "is a daughter of the highest king, the food and consummation of all virtues, Jacob's ladder, on the highest round of which God Himself descends." St. Jerome says, "The crown has not been promised to a good beginning, not to the good continuation, but to the end."

"Perfect Thou my goings in Thy paths that my footsteps be not moved" (Ps. xvi. 5). Lead me to a good end, lest I also, having begun well, be lost in the end.

SECOND POINT. MEANS OF PERSEVERANCE.—Jesus Christ indicated these means in these few words: "Take ye heed therefore, watch ye and pray" (Mark xiii. 33). And St. Peter repeats: "Be prudent and watch in prayer" (1 Peter iv. 7).

"Behold," says the Lord. What shall we behold, O Lord? "Let the light of Thy face

shine upon Thy servant" (Ps. cxviii. 135). Behold, O my soul, all the miseries that befell those that did not persevere. Solomon lost his wisdom, Samson his strength, Saul his kingdom, Adam his own happiness and that of all his descendants. Woe to those, says the Holy Ghost (Ecclus. ii. 16), that lose patience and forsake the right way. What shall we do when the Lord enters into judgment upon us? Justice will be of no avail to the just (Ez. xi. 12). All will be lost for him if he lacks perseverance. Behold Jesus, our Model, as in every virtue, so also in perseverance. "Father, I have finished the work which Thou hast given Me to do" (John xvii. 4). He drank the chalice of the Passion unto the dregs. The Scribes and Pharisees, the helpers of the devil, challenged Him to leave His work unaccomplished by bidding Him descend from the cross, but He bore their sarcasm, and expired only when He could say with full truth, "All is consummated." Behold, likewise, the examples of the saints, that however far they

might be advanced in virtue, ever trembled for their salvation when they remembered the words: "Who stands, let him take heed lest he fall." They asked and conjured the Lord to give them that grace without which all others are of no avail. St. Thomas Aquinas asked daily for the grace to persevere unto the end in his first zeal... Oh, Lord, open the eyes of my soul, that these models may ever be before my mind.

"Watch," says Our Lord, further. O my soul, thou hast an enemy that is striving to take entire possession of thee. He never sleeps, but ever watches. It is Satan who dominates all bad inclinations and passions. Pride, distraction of the mind, sloth, impatience, aversion, envy, inconstancy, all will do their best at his bidding to enter thy heart, and if they succeed in effecting an entrance, it will be very hard for thee to remove them. One will follow the other, and unawares the spirit of lukewarmness will rule in thee. Should I allow that? Experience has taught me too often that this

is the common course. When will this experience make me prudent?

"Pray," says the Lord. "If the Lord does not watch the city, the watchmen watch in vain" (Ps. cxxvi. 1). Prayer is the flame which gives new warmth and fire to hearts beginning to get cold. Without continued, confident, devout prayer there will be no zeal, no joy in undertakings, no success in charitable works, no firmness in virtue.

And now, my soul, how dost thou apply these means of perseverance? How hast thou applied them heretofore? How wilt thou do it in future? Dost thou often remember the presence of God? Is the example of Jesus and of the saints frequently before thy mind? How dost thou use the means of perseverance which thy Holy Rules offer: daily examens, Divine Office, meditation, spiritual reading, monthly retreat, confession and Holy Communion? All virtues are, so to say, in a race, but perseverance alone obtains the prize. "Perseverance alone," says St. Bernard, "gives heaven to man, and man to

heaven." Therefore, it is useless to run if one does not intend to run unto the end of the race-track. Of what use is the seed that shoots up but is destroyed before harvest-time? We shall reap in due time, says the Apostle, if we do not grow tired. The beginning is something, but perseverance is all. Judas began well, but did not persevere. "Blessed are they who walk in the law of the Lord," says the Psalmist (Ps. cxviii. 1). And Jesus Christ said, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life." My soul, if these words of the Lord and His saints fail to make an impression on thee, consider to what dangers thou exposest thyself when slacking in thy first zeal; to the danger not only of losing the reward of a good religious, but of losing thy eternal salvation. If tepidity has seized thee, how will it end with thee? Thou toilest on a steep decline; once thou hast fallen, it will be hard for thee to rise. In the beginning it would have been easy to resist, but now who knows what might happen! Loss of thy vo-

cation and the great graces connected with it, perhaps loss of eternal bliss!

O my soul, what dangers! O my God, how many means of perseverance, but also how many reasons for my shame! No, Lord, if I have not kept my first zeal, it is not Thy fault; it is only my laziness and lukewarmness which have caused it. Forgive, O Lord, forgive. I will do better. Ye saints of heaven, who have persevered unto the end, and now enjoy the reward, obtain for me the grace to carry out my resolution.

Prayer after Meditation.

OCTOBER.

MEDITATION I.

The Motives that Induced Jesus to Institute the Blessed Sacrament.

First Prelude.—Behold our divine Saviour saying the words: "Do this for a commemoration of Me" (Luke xxii. 19).

Second Prelude.—Grant us, O Lord, to understand the motives that induced Thee to institute the Blessed Sacrament, and to be thereby inflamed with the most ardent love.

First Point. Jesus instituted the Blessed Sacrament that we might think of Him always.—Jesus could not remain with us forever, yet His heart desired to do so; His wisdom and omnipotence invented a means to return to His Father and at the same time to remain with us—the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. Now

He calls out to us from all tabernacles of the world, "Remember Me, remember Me." Surely it is our duty to fulfil this, His wish, for what did His love not do for us! He has pardoned our sins, paid our debts with His blood. Had it not been for Him we could never have been saved, for we were incapable of paying the ten thousand talents of our debt. He has ransomed us from the slavery of the devil in which we sighed and languished. By His death He broke our fetters; now we possess the liberty of the children of God. He has conferred on us a thousand other benefits; for us He instituted the holy sacraments, gave us Mary for our Mother. Is it not right and just that we should think of Him?

He wants us to think of Him as a Judge whose eye pursues us everywhere. St. Thomas of Aquin says: "If the thought of the benefits of Jesus fills our hearts with thanks and love, the thought of His omnipresence surely prevents us from sinning, and that was the intention that induced Him to remain with us

in such a manner so we can hardly forget Him." As a child will not easily do wrong before the eyes of his parents, so the thought that Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament sees us will preserve us from evil. Again St. Thomas says: "He also remains with us that we may think of the future account to be given, and may think of this for an increase of our merit." For surely the thought that Jesus, who bestoweth so much good on us and watches over us everywhere, will one day reward or damn us, is surely capable of inciting us zealously to use all occasions to increase our eternal reward. Thus Jesus remains with us to call out to us: "Oh, think of Me, your Benefactor, your Witness, your Judge." O Lord, grant that this thought may never escape my mind.

Second Point. Jesus Instituted the Blessed Sacrament to Give Us a Worthy Sacrifice.—The sacrifics of the Old Testament were imperfect; they had no intrinsic power of forgiveness of sin. "It is impossible that by the blood of bulls and heifers

the sins of men can be forgiven," writes St. Paul. These sacrifices could impart grace only in so far as they were in relation to Jesus Christ, the sacrifice of the New Covenant. Therefore, a sacrifice was required which should be well pleasing to God, which should give satisfaction for our sins, and should impart to us the graces of which we were in need. Yet where could such a sacrifice be found? If all human beings for all eternity had exhausted their mental strength in investigation, never could they have found one. The wisdom, omnipotence, and love of the Redeemer alone could procure one. He gave Himself as a sacrifice. As the only-begotten Son of God, He was infinitely well pleasing to the Father; as God Himself He could pardon our sins, and grant us grace for eternal life.

How grateful must I be to Jesus for the institution of the Blessed Sacrament! On Calvary Jesus sacrificed Himself in a bloody manner; yet Malachias had prophesied that in all places of the earth from the rising of

the sun to the setting thereof a sacrifice should be offered. By the institution of the Most Holy Sacrament, in which His flesh and blood are contained, Jesus has verified this prophecy, for in Holy Mass this His flesh and blood is daily and in all places offered up to God as a sacrifice. Thanks to Thee, O good Jesus; now we may confidently appear before the throne of God, since we possess a sacrifice which is infinitely well pleasing to Him.

Yes, we possess it by Thy love. "Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith: Sacrifice and oblation Thou wouldest not; but a body Thou hast fitted to Me; Holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I: Behold I come... that I should do Thy will, O God!" (Hebr. x. 5, 7.)

THIRD POINT. JESUS INSTITUTED THE BLESSED SACRAMENT TO PREPARE A NOURISHMENT FOR OUR SOULS.—The Jews were fed in the desert for forty years with the manna of heaven. Elias too received a gift from heaven, food brought by an angel,

nourished by which he marched forty days and forty nights to the Mount of Horeb. Jesus fed the multitudes in the desert with miraculous bread—but we receive more than all these, the Most Holy Eucharist, Holy Communion. Jesus Christ has given Himself to us as nourishment... He has given Himself to all without distinction—to the good as well as to the bad, to St. John as well as to Judas, the traitor. He made this sun of love to shine for good and bad... Jesus unites Himself with us, He lives in us—we are in the most intimate manner united with Him... Wherefore all this, O Lord? O my soul, that you might not be wanting in food on the way to heaven, that you might not be exhausted, but march in virtue of this food to the mountain of God—heaven. Yes, this food shall restore the evil which the forbidden fruit of paradise has wrought. The latter had filled the soul with darkness, provoked in us the motions of sensuality, and caused death for body and soul, but the divine food lightens the dark-

ness of the soul, kills sensuality and restores life to the body and to the soul.

O my Lord and Saviour, how could I ever sufficiently thank Thee for so much good! We must try to correspond to the holy intentions which moved Thee to the institution of the Blessed Sacrament. Grant, then, O Lord, that we may ever lovingly remember Thee, thank Thee for Thy benefits, shun sin because Thy eye rests on us, increase our merit because Thou wilt be our Judge. We offer Thee up to the heavenly Father because Thou art infinitely well pleasing to Him and canst obtain for us remission of all guilt, and overflowing grace. We desire to receive Thee, the fruit of the tree of life. Come, then, O Lord, into our heart. May the effect of Thy entrance correspond to Thy benevolent intention at the institution of the Blessed Sacrament; this we ask of Thee through the intercession of our dear Mother Mary.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION II.

Our Wishes and Desires.

First Prelude.—Behold Jesus Christ when, beaming with love, He says to His apostles these words: "With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you" (Luke xxii. 15).

Second Prelude.—As the fruit of this meditation, let us ask for the grace to be filled with the same wishes and desires which filled the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

First Point. What Does the Sacred Heart Desire?—Consider that the human heart is full of inordinate wishes and desires. We long for too many things, and what we desire we desire too much. Our heart is not as God wants it to be. He wishes that our desires be directed to heaven, but we turn them to the earth. Therefore so much disquietude and lack of peace. One single inordinate desire of our first parents plunged the whole human race into sin... To teach our heart how much to covet and desire,

the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity has taken to Himself a human heart, to be like unto us in all things. Let us examine the wishes of the Sacred Heart.

"And I have a baptism wherewith I am to be baptized; and how am I straitened until it be accomplished?" (Luke xii. 50.) With these words my God and Redeemer makes known His desire for His Passion and death. The cross which was present to His eyes during His whole life was to Him the altar on which the sacrifice of Redemption for the world was to be offered—and He longed to ascend this altar.

"With desire have I desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer." Thus spoke Our Lord on the night of His capture, to teach us how we should long for the banquet of love—Holy Communion. Never can our desire for the reception of this holy food equal the vehemence that actuated Jesus to institute this most holy sacrifice.

"I thirst" (John xix. 28). "Lord," a holy Father of the Church asks, "for what

dost Thou thirst?" Thou art silent about the cross, but proclaimest Thy thirst in a loud voice. For what, O Lord, dost Thou thirst? "After thy salvation, thy happiness, O soul. For thy sake I suffer more than by the cross." Thus He desires our salvation—yea, the salvation of all men. This desire consumed Him like a burning thirst, not only on the cross, but during His whole life. The end of His life was: "I am come to cast fire on the earth, and what will I, but that it be kindled?" (Luke xii. 49.)

O Jesus, these, then, are the flames which burst forth from Thy heart: to suffer for us, to unite Thyself with us; the salvation of souls, the honor of Thy Father! O that these flames would consume my heart! Lord, send down a spark of that fire into my heart, let it enkindle desires like Thine. Does not Thy servant Blessed Laurence Justinian tell us that we shall advance with giant steps in virtue by our good desires?

SECOND POINT. WE SHOULD MAKE THE DESIRES OF THE SACRED HEART OUR

Desires.—If St. Francis de Sales tells me: "Desire nothing, fear nothing," he intends to say that we should desire nothing earthly or fear it, but should with all confidence acquire the wishes and desires of the heart of Jesus, to make them our own wishes and desires. God Himself praised Daniel because he was a man of desire.

My soul, examine thyself. Jesus desired to suffer to restore the offended honor of His Father. How about my desire after sufferings? Alas, I barely submit to the mortifications that my Holy Rules or intercourse with fellow beings impose upon me. Jesus desires ardently to eat the Pasch with me, that is, to let me partake of His own flesh and blood in Holy Communion. Do I desire ardently to receive Him in this Sacrament of love? Oh, if the desire to receive Jesus animated me, would I on the eve of Communion days not think oftener and more joyfully of the approaching happiness? Jesus thirsted for the salvation of souls. I imagine myself desirous for the same, yet am I will-

ing to work for that purpose? Do I by zealous prayer support those that directly work for the salvation of souls, the conversion of sinners and the spreading of the kingdom of God? Do I take to heart the words of Thomas à Kempis: "Strive thus to conduct thyself that nobody approach thee who does not leave thee better than when he came"? Oh, how often I say in the Our Father: "Thy kingdom come," yet hardly do I think of the honor of God in the kingdom of souls. How weak is my zeal compared to that of Jesus Christ and the saints! "To suffer or to die!" St. Teresa exclaimed. My weak nature says, "No, O Lord, neither the one nor the other." The saints loved souls. What scalding tears did they not shed for them, how many works of penance they practised! How many prayers for souls were sent up to heaven! They seemed to live but to help their neighbor; yea, St. Paul even wished "to be an anathema from Christ, for (his) brethern, who (were his) kinsmen according to the flesh" (Rom. ix. 3).

O Jesus, how these models put me to

shame! Why should I not be able with Thy grace to accomplish the same as they? Grant that a holy desire be enkindled in my heart and that in me be verified the words of St. Laurence: "The holy wishes and desires are the beginning, the continuation and the completion of virtue; they bestow perseverance; they create saints and martyrs; they impart strength and remove all trouble." Behold, O Lord, my heart is full of wishes, it often desires honor and esteem before men, pleasures and enjoyments of life, satisfaction of the senses, of pride and self-love. Oh, take all these wishes from my heart, and replenish it with better and nobler desire.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

The Death of a Good Religious.

First Prelude.—Let us go in spirit to the death-bed of a zealous religious... She holds her crucifix and the blessed candle in her hand. Rest and peace are portrayed on her countenance.

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace to begin a life of zeal, which is the necessary preparation for a good death.

First Point. The Past Consoles Her. —Every human life is a chain of crosses and troubles. There is but one way leading to heaven—the road over Calvary. Pious Thomas á Kempis says: "Although thou shouldst have been rapt up to the third heaven with St. Paul, thou art not thereby secured that thou shalt suffer no adversity, for I (said Jesus) will show him how great things he must suffer for My name." Whether we are willing or not, we shall always have something to suffer. The zealous religious had her share in the lot which no man can escape. Yet where are now the trials and sufferings which she daily bore in the exercise of her duties? Where are the numerous mortifications that she freely took upon herself or that others prepared for her, or that her Holy Rule prescribed? They are agreeable recollections, sources of joy. Oh, how different they now appear to her view when

the glow of the death candle falls upon them!

Where is now the repugnance against which she had to fight, the temptations that she had to overcome? She may well congratulate herself that, instead of having yielded to her natural inclinations, she has chosen as her portion the cross of Jesus Christ, with its apparent rigor yet real sweetness. She has in truth considered her soul to be the acre that God entrusted to her, the weeding, planting and working of which were hard and troublesome. Now the end of the day has come, she may rest and gather in the harvest.

For though all things pass, her merits remain. "Their works follow them" (Apoc. xiv. 13), says the Holy Ghost, and "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" (Matt. x. 42). "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy" (Ps. cxxv. 5). What a consolation! What joy at this retrospect! Truly, if anything pains her at this moment

it is the thought of not having fought more, suffered more, worked more. My soul, you too shall one day think like her—why not act now as you then would wish to have acted?

Second Point. The Present Gives Her Confidence.—If it is true at any time that, as the Holy Ghost says: "A secure mind is like a continual feast" (Prov. xv. 15), it is more so during our last moments. The zealous religious has in the simplicity of her heart sought God, has attempted to live by faith, seeing God in all events and steering straight toward Him, her only end. But what of her faults, to which she, like every one, was addicted?... Oh, she knows they are washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ. She endeavored to replace by her prayers and works of penance what was wanting to the sufferings of Christ as to her. She can therefore look up full of confidence to God, the Father of mercies, the God of all consolation, who forgave the debt to Mary Magdalen and pardoned the sins of

the thief on the cross. St. Francis de Sales says, "The throne of God's mercy rests on our misery." Has not her future Judge Himself said: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy" (Matt. v. 7), and "Judge not and you shall not be judged. Condemn not and you shall not be condemned. Forgive and you shall be forgiven" (Luke vi. 37)? What else has a good religious done during her life, but practise mercy, indulgence, and love toward her neighbor?

If she finds something good in herself, she nevertheless counts herself among the unprofitable servants—"we have done that which we ought to do" (Luke xvii. 10). She considers "by the grace of God, I am what I am" (1 Cor. xv. 10). The magnificent words "Well done, thou good and faithful servant" resound already in her ears, heaven comes down into her soul, it descends as into the soul of the penitent thief, when he listened to these words: "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with Me in paradise" (Luke xxiii. 43). Her eye may rest con-

fidently on her crucifix; she too was crucified with Christ, and like her divine Model she was unwilling to descend from it before death. Full of consolation, she hears the words of holy Church: "The zeal of God was in her." Peacefully she looks around in the circle of her surrounding sisters, whom she has ever loved and edified by her example. O happy death! "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord!" (Apoc. xiv. 13.) Oh, that my end was like unto theirs.

THIRD POINT. THE FUTURE DOES NOT FRIGHTEN HER.—As the apparent rest of the wicked at the approach of death often changes into mad despair, thus the fear of the just frequently passes at the end of their lives into the most peaceful calm, into the fullest confidence in God's limitless mercy. If any fear is about to stir, the zealous religious may think with St. Teresa: "He that will judge me is my best friend." "I know," she can say, "whom I have believed," to whom I have consecrated body and soul, intellect, freedom and will, by my holy

vows, "and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him, against that day" (2 Timothy i. 12). "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge will render to me in that day" (2 Timothy iv. 7). Heaven opens and in the background, surrounded by glory, she beholds the angels and saints, Mary, her queen, at the head; she beholds her dear ones that went before, her deceased sisters... Oh, now she understands those words that she recited so often here below: "I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go to the house of the Lord. Our feet were standing in thy courts, O Jerusalem" (Ps. cxxi. 1, 2).

O my God, why am I not aglow with the desire of dying the death of the just?... Why do I not lead the life of the just, the life of a zealous religious? How foolish to prefer the fright on account of the past, the fear in the present, the anguish for the

future before the sweet heavenly peace of the just. My Lord and God, help me, I entreat Thee, to regulate my whole life in such a way that at my death I may truly say: "In peace in the selfsame I will sleep, and I will rest: For Thou, O Lord, singularly, hast settled me in hope" (Ps. iv. 9).

Prayer after Meditation.

NOVEMBER.

MEDITATION I.

The Effects of Holy Communion.

First Prelude.—Place yourself in spirit among the disciples of Jesus, when He speaks the words: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, you shall not have life in you" (John vi. 54).

Second Prelude.—Ask for grace to experience in yourself the wonderful effects of Holy Communion.

First Point. Holy Communion Preserves and Increases Purity in Our Soul. —St. Bernard says, "Holy Communion works two things in us: it diminishes temptations and preserves us from sin. If any among you no longer feels such violent temptations to anger, to envy, to impurity...he owes it to the body and blood of the Lord;

for the strength of the Sacrament is active in him" (Serm. de C. D. x). "It soothes," says St. Cyril, "the adverse law in our members...and stills the tempests of the soul." Holy Church confirms these sayings, when declaring that Holy Communion cleanses the soul of the worthy receiver from venial sin, and prevents it from falling back by diminishing the passions and temptations, these two principal sources of all our faults; it reveals to the soul the abomination of sin and fills it with a great horror of sin; lastly, it gives the soul new strength to withstand the allurements to sin!... We see, indeed, that not only many religious, but thousands of Christians living in the midst of a dangerous world, preserve a wonderful purity of heart, because they receive Holy Communion frequently and worthily.

What effects has Holy Communion produced in me? If I find anything good in me, I must certainly attribute it to Holy Communion alone, which I have the happiness of receiving so often. Must I not, then,

be heartily sorry, in less happy times not to have known better its purifying strength? How many sins might have been avoided! With how much greater pleasure would God have looked down on me! Has my soul reached that degree of purity which she, fed with the "wheat of the elect and the wine begetting virgins," might have obtained? If not, what is the cause? A neglect of Holy Communion; for St. Teresa says that a single Holy Communion is capable of rendering us saints. And St. Dionysius assures us it is a fire which transforms everything around it into fire. Thus Our Lord and God, who Himself is called a consuming fire by Holy Scripture, makes us by this food like Himself, yea, He deifies us, as it were. Must I, then, not blame myself? Am I always well and worthily prepared for the reception of this heavenly food? Or is my soul, for lack of preparation, like a green piece of wood, unfit to burn? O my soul, in this case, beg God that He teach you what spirit you ought to maintain in order not

only to preserve your purity, but daily to increase it.

Second Point. It Increases and Preserves the Strength of Our Soul.—Man lives by the union of soul and body. The soul, united to God, by the ties of love has supernatural life. The more intimate this union, the stronger the soul. A more intimate union than between food and the one that consumes it can not be imagined; food is transformed into flesh and blood, thus becoming part of human life. Jesus Christ, therefore, chose to give us His holy body and His holy blood under the form of food, viz., bread and wine. He wanted to become a nourishment, to be as closely united with us as possible. O blessed union! I, unworthy one, I, sinful creature, become united with God, the infinite holy One. He, the Creator of heaven and earth, unites with me. I can not doubt it—His infallible, divine word tells me so: "He that eateth My flesh and drinketh My blood, abideth in Me, and I in him" (John vi. 57). What strength must

that union impart to my soul! Could it be possible otherwise? The strong One, the Lord of hosts, at whose name all knees bend, of those that are in heaven, on earth and under the earth, has given Himself to me. Although the species no longer remain in me, Jesus with His grace abides in me, to be the Life of my life, the Soul of my soul. With thanks to our God we may acknowledge that we owe it to Holy Communion, this divine Food, if in so many temptations, especially those of the flesh, we have been victorious; for it makes us like lions breathing flames, ready to frighten off devils. (St. Chrys.) We have to thank Holy Communion and the strength that it imparts, if in the numerous difficulties of our vocation and our office, amidst tedious trials and many disappointments, as well as the ingratitude of men, we do not lose courage; to Holy Communion we must, lastly, ascribe it if the inestimable grace of final perseverance in our vocation will be granted to us; for as St. Chrysostom says, "By the body of Our Lord I hope one day

to possess heaven with all its goods." Come then, O my Saviour, come! Behold, she whom Thou lovest is weak, is infirm. Speak to my soul: "I am thy salvation" (Ps. xxxiv. 3).

THIRD POINT. IT ENNOBLES AND PERFECTS THE SOUL.—As the shoot of a good tree grafted on a wild trunk takes off the latter's bitterness and causes it to bear good fruit, so the body of Jesus Christ embodied with our own corrects our faults and weaknesses, imparts to us His Deity, together with the strength of yielding fruits of justice, like to those that He Himself produces. Thus the angelic Doctor, Thomas of Aquinas, teaches. Not the soul alone, the body likewise partakes in this ennobling process. This holy Food not only strengthens us against all impure temptations, it diminishes them likewise, and if one day our bodies rise from the grave, glorious, impassible, immortal, this proceeds from having been fed with the most holy flesh and blood of the Lord. The soul above all is ennobled and made susceptible to good. How often I have experienced it! After

a good Holy Communion nothing gave me trouble, I worked with joy; to bear with others was in no way hard; the works of love were done easily and quickly. No wonder! Jesus Christ was acting in me. On my death-bed I need not fear death; Christ is my Life, death my gain; for the last time Jesus Christ will, as it were, graft Himself upon me to impart the sap of immortality, then to transplant me into the ever-blooming pleasure garden of paradise.

O my God and Lord, Jesus Christ, come into my heart! It is full of faults and infirmities, yet Thou, O Lord, purify it; it is weak in virtue, but strengthen it, unite it to Thee, and make me produce those fruits which Thou expectest of me. I promise Thee, henceforth to prepare as well as possible for Holy Communion, that it may have those effects for me. Help me thereto with Thy grace.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION II.

Resignation to the Will of God.

First Prelude.—Behold God on His throne in heaven, how He ordains the whole course of the universe and gazes with attentive eye upon everything that happens.

Second Prelude.—Pray devoutly with the Royal Prophet: "Teach me to do Thy will, for Thou art my God" (Ps. cxlii. 10).

First Point. In What Does Perfect Resignation to the Will of God Consist?—By perfect resignation to the will of God we understand the intimate union of our will with the divine, so that we desire nothing but what God desires, wish nothing but what He wills, and as He wills it; that we are ready to go quietly and joyfully wherever He calls us, to accept what He sends and to do what He demands of us. In this happy state one does everything without disquiet, without impetuosity or haste, without disgust or ill-will, without postponement, without worry about the good or bad issue.

One is ready beforehand for either issue as God wills it; one has no other preference nor other love than the love for the divine will. O holy indifference, that knows no anxiety, no carelessness! One accepts everything contentedly in the natural order of things: health or sickness, beauty or deformity, wealth or poverty, honor or dishonor, life or death; in the supernatural order of things everything is equally welcome: spiritual aridity as well as consolation and zeal, abandonment and darkness as well as sweetness and light. St. Francis de Sales comprises perfect resignation in these few words: "Desire nothing, fear nothing, ask nothing, refuse nothing."

O happy state! How restful, meek and peaceful thou must be! O august state! To have one and the same will with God, the Holy of holies! Such is the occupation of the angels of heaven; it was the occupation of the Son of God Himself on earth! "I came down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me"

(John vi. 38). It is the occupation of all the saints, and will be my occupation for all eternity. "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" (Acts ix. 6.) "Father, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. vi. 10). Let this will be my daily bread, as it was to Thy divine Son, when saying, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John iv. 34).

Second Point. On What Must Our Resignation to the Will of God Rest?—It rests on the immutable foundation of faith, on the word, wisdom, and love of God. I know that everything which happens in this world happens by divine dispensation or permission. No leaf falls from the tree, no hair from our head, if God does not allow it. If we love Him, everything that happens will turn to our good: "We know that to them that love God all things work together unto good" (Rom. viii. 28). I know that God knows better than myself that which is good for me. He knows me, my inclinations, my wants, my defects and infirmities, and

He is guided by this knowledge, for the Holy Ghost says, "He knoweth our frame" (Ps. cii. 14). I know that God often uses means for reaching His end that are in apparent contradiction. The captivity served to the elevation of Joseph on the throne of Egypt; the cross of the Son of God to His glory! That which seems troublesome and tedious to me often is a proof of God's love for me. He has marked out each one's road to heaven, and it is a chain of events, graces, tribulations, and consolations. God alone knows this way. He, then, must lead us on it, we cannot lead ourselves; we know not whether this or that which we desire or fear is an obstacle or a remedy for us. Our entire resignation to God will be a mighty inducement for God to lead us to a happy end. Should a child not feel at ease relying on the hand of his father, and would God abandon to its fate a soul that is entirely resigned to Him?

Behold, then, O my soul, on what your resignation is founded. Why, then, should I be disturbed? "The Lord ruleth me: and

I shall want nothing" (Ps. xxii. 1). I myself cannot appoint what is good for me; a ship that has but an inexperienced seaman at the helm is near destruction. If I review my past life, I shall find that frequently the greatest tribulations have served for my spiritual advance. Have I not reason gratefully to acknowledge that divine Providence has guided me?

THIRD POINT. WHAT ADVANTAGE DOES RESIGNATION TO THE WILL OF GOD BRING? —It not only renders us pleasing to God, but it gives to the soul a rest, a peace that can be disturbed by nothing, not even by the greatest difficulties and suffering; it takes the soul with one bound to the pinnacle of perfection. It is the compilation of all virtues, the outflow, the fruit of the love for God, Our Father, the proof of a lively faith in divine Providence, of a firm confidence in His goodness, of a deep humility, that distrusts its own wisdom; it is the perfect holocaust which God demands of us. "Therefore," says St. Bernard, "is the word of St.

Paul, 'Lord what wilt Thou that have me to do,' short, it is true, but full of meaning." Yea, St. Francis de Sales says, "The resignation to the holy will of God is the mark of our eternal election, for it is impossible for God to refuse to receive into His kingdom one that dies in this perfect resignation."

O my God, why have I so often preferred my will to Thine? Why have I grown bitter toward persons or things that were but instruments of Thy will? Only because these truths were not present to my mind. Imprint them deep into my heart, that I may never forget them; especially not when a cross oppresses me, when others are adverse to me, or when I have many difficulties. Teach me, then, to recognize in all Thy fatherly hand, which governs all lovingly and yet is almighty.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

End of Man.

First Prelude.—Let us place ourselves in spirit before the judgment seat; hear God speak: "I have created thee as a rational man, made a Christian, a religious of thee. How hast thou corresponded to thy vocation?"

Second Prelude.—A fervent prayer to reach perfectly the intentions of God.

First Point. Why Was I Created?—Every person endowed with intellect has a certain end in view for all his actions—how much more had the supreme Wisdom a fixed end when resolving to call me into existence. What was this end? I was taught the answer when but a child: "To know God, to love Him and thereby to gain heaven." That renders man perfect, as the Holy Ghost says (Eccles. xii. 13). I have no other purpose in life; if I do not strive to reach the end for which I was created, I have no right to exist, I am as a candle without a light, a bell

without a sound. All my thoughts, words, and actions must be directed to this end. "Whether you eat or drink or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor. x. 31). If I performed the greatest works, yea, possessed the gift of miracles, all would be vanity of vanities, if God were not the end of my actions. "I should run and grow tired," says St. Augustine, "but I should run outside the road." And the Holy Ghost declares that "all have gone aside, they are become unprofitable together" (Ps. lii. 4).

Have I always worked and lived for this end? My soul, remember your sins, then answer... Yet there is no more sublime end. God Himself is my end! He has created me after His likeness, has given me understanding, to know Him, a will to love Him, a body and a soul to serve Him. "O Lord," exclaims the pious sufferer Job, "what is a man that Thou shouldst magnify him? or why dost Thou set Thy heart upon him?" (Job vii. 17.)

And St. Augustine: "For Thyself, O Lord, Thou hast created us, and our heart will not be at rest until it rests in Thee."

Second Point. Wherefore Am I a Christian?—God has a certain intention, an end in view when, before so many millions, He called me to His true Church. Or would He have bestowed this inestimable benefit to be of no avail for me? As man I am bound to know, love and serve God, yet as Christian I have a far-reaching duty: I must strive to know Him, to love and serve Him as Jesus Christ has taught us. And what is His doctrine? "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me" (Matt. xvi. 24). I am then as a Christian to deny my nature, my inclinations and passions—in a word to deny myself after the example and the doctrine of the Son of God. If I wish to be a true disciple of Jesus Christ and to be called thus, then I must be conformable to Him. He was humble, obedient, chaste, benevolent, compassionate and merciful, full

of desire for suffering. And how am I?... I must be clothed with the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Apostle says, "For as many of you as have been baptized in Christ, have put on Christ" (Gal. iii. 27). What an honor! But what a disgrace would it be if I put on Christ exteriorly only, while my interior does not correspond to the exterior. I must, as it were, be embodied in Christ, for says the Apostle, "Know you not that your bodies are the members of Christ?" (1 Cor. vi. 15.) Do I, a sensual, unmortified limb, belong to such a head?... I must, so to say, lead the same life as Jesus Christ, "that the life of Jesus may be made manifest in our bodies" (2 Cor. iv. 10). Since I am a Christian, the following words should be verified in me: Jesus Christ thinks, speaks and acts in her. May I claim this testimony before God? Can I truly say, "I live, no, not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). O God, that it were true! As a Christian I must have this aim, the end which God had in view when He called me to Christianity! If

I direct my aim to something else, I miss my vocation, I disappoint God, my Lord, my Redeemer.

THIRD POINT. WHY AM I A RELIGIOUS? —From among the millions of Christians in the world God has selected a few to serve Him in a special manner in the solitude of the convent. I belong to these few. And why? What prompted God to select me? Surely not my merits, for there are thousands better than I who have not been called.

No, God's intention was that I should strive after a higher perfection in the religious state and thereby give Him more honor and glory. From all eternity He resolved to call me to the religious state, He has directed all the events of my life to this purpose. Now He justly expects me to be a religious co-operating with His intentions, a religious who is not satisfied with being saved, but who strives after high perfection, one who offers all her actions and omissions to God, who esteems and prizes nothing but her end, who sacrifices all, is willing to suf-

fer all to obtain this end. Have I thought like this of my holy vocation? Or am I satisfied with an ordinary life, distinguished from the life of seculars only by a few religious exercises? Should this be the case, oh, how much I have disappointed my Lord and God! He might say to me: "I have planted a chosen vineyard, I have done much, very much for it...and what fruit do I find?" I even risk my salvation, for perfection and salvation are two terms almost signifying the same for a religious. Nobody forced me to become a religious; I was free. But I am not when by God's grace I am a religious—the striving after perfection is a holy duty, the duty of my state. If I do not fulfil it, God will withdraw His grace; perhaps He will cast me off, as an artisan throws away a tool of which he expected good service, but which has proved totally useless. I deceive and disappoint the world likewise; they take me to be pious and very mortified, crucified and dead to the world, and how is it in reality?

O my God, what thanks I owe Thee for my three-fold dignity of man, Christian, and religious! But then, what an account I have to render! I conjure Thee to pardon my faults, and to grant me to know better my three-fold end; give me all the graces I stand in need of to correspond to Thy holy intentions in a perfect manner. Amen.

Prayer after Meditation.

DECEMBER.

MEDITATION I.

The Miracles of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament.

First Prelude.—Behold Jesus Christ saying the words: "My flesh is meat indeed and My blood is drink indeed" (John vi. 56).

Second Prelude.—O God, who hast left us a memorial of Thy miracles, grant that the meditation on these miracles fill us more and more with gratitude.

First Point. Holy Communion is a Miracle of Love.—Nobody is able to give more than he possesses. There have been men who for love of one have made themselves slaves. Our Redeemer has given us many great gifts, yet all are surpassed by the gift of Himself. More He had not, more

He could not give. And what He gives is the highest good, which the angels admire and which constitutes their happiness for all eternity. He gives much, immensely much, because He reserves nothing for Himself. If a king presented us with ever so great a treasure, he would be giving little, for there is much left to him. Jesus, however, gives all that He owns: His Godhead and Humanity, body and soul, His graces. He shows to us still greater love by giving Himself in a manner so as to let us become, as it were, master over Him. We may dispose of Him. He is at our command as a prisoner, tied and fettered in the prison of our hearts. Love has delivered Him to us. Why, O my Jesus, hast Thou done this? What dost Thou behold in us? What dost Thou expect from us? What interest urges Thee to give Thyself in this manner? We men hardly ever give anything without having our own interest in view; there is little disinterested love here below... But if you want to witness pure, unselfish love, then turn your

eyes to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament. If anything attracts Him, it is our misery, our spiritual poverty. O what love! Who could describe it worthily, who admire it adequately, who sufficiently thank Jesus for this benefit? We are powerless to do so. Ye saints of heaven, come to our aid, help us to praise, glorify, admire Jesus, above all to thank Him in the Sacrament of His love.

Second Point. Holy Communion is a Miracle of Power.—The manna in the desert was a wonderful food. It came down from heaven in a mysterious manner, and had for every one the taste he wished. The five loaves with which Our Lord fed the five thousand were miraculous bread, and the Jews present became so enthusiastic over this miracle that they intended to proclaim Jesus their king. In Holy Communion we receive a much more miraculous Food. At Cana in Galilee water was changed into wine —here bread is changed into the sacred body of the Lord, and wine into His precious blood. The appearances of bread and wine

remain, and those not enlightened by the light of faith behold nothing but bread and wine; yet by a miracle without parallel, the body and the blood of Jesus Christ is hidden under the appearances—the essence of bread and wine no longer exist. If there are two appearances, Jesus is present with body and blood under each; no matter under which appearance we receive Him, we receive Him equally. At any earthly repast the offered dishes decrease in proportion to the number of guests—not so at Thy banquet, O Jesus! Whether I appear there alone or accompanied by thousands, I receive as much as those thousands together, and all receive neither more nor less than I alone. Should the world exist for a million years longer, the number of men multiply a thousandfold, never will this Food become less, nor poorer in quality. It continues what it is—the whole body of Jesus Christ. Yet the effects of this food are different, and even that is miraculous. John receives it and his heart is set aflame with love, so that he seeks repose

on the bosom of his Lord. Judas receives the same food and immediately rises and leaves to betray his Master. The one receives life, the other death. Thus the sun benefits and enlightens the healthy eye, while it blinds the sick one. If we divide the wonderful food, we behold a new miracle. Before the division Jesus was wholly present under the appearances; if we divide them ever so often, He remains wholly present in every little particle. The manner in which His presence is effected is equally wonderful. The priest, a poor mortal, speaks a few words, and these few words, uttered in a whisper, resound in the heights of heaven and draw down the Son of God upon the altar. "O wonderful mystery!" exclaims holy Church, "the bread of angels becomes the food of men!" Indeed, what miracles! "They constitute," says St. Thomas, "the greatest miracle of the Lord, greater than the changing of water into wine at Cana, greater than the multiplying of the loaves, greater than the raising of Lazarus."

"Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed" (John xx. 29).

Third Point. Holy Communion is a Miracle of Patience.—Consider to what insults Jesus Christ is exposed in the Blessed Sacrament. How numerous, how terrible are they, and they are offered instead of the gratitude that He might justly expect for His love! Let us only remember the insults of the Jews, the pagans, the heretics; the desecrations by Catholics who receive Holy Communion with no preparation or with tepidity—yea, what is worse, receive it like Judas with a heart stained by mortal sin, and occupied by Satan, its lord and king. What has Jesus had to bear already in Holy Communion from me?... He bears all, He does not take revenge, and for more than nineteen hundred years He remains patient amid all this ignominy. Herod demanded a miracle from the Lord—He was silent... Herod and his court mocked Him—He was silent... Thus Jesus works before the eyes of Herod the great miracle of patience; yet

Herod is not aware of it. Before our eyes Jesus in like manner performs that miracle of toleration, which becomes the greater as it is to continue to the end of the world. Jesus foresaw all, yet it did not prevent Him from instituting the Most Holy Sacrament, this wonderful food.

O my Jesus, how grateful I should be at the remembrance of so great miracles! Thou workest all these miracles of love, of power, and patience, in order not to deprive me of the happiness of Thy presence. Thou workest them that to-day again I may receive this wonderful food; Thou workest them to be my Viaticum on my death-bed.

O Jesus, give me now the sentiments that I wish to have at that moment, so that this food be in reality for me a food of immortality. Amen.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION II.

Jesus in the Crib a Model of Obedience, Poverty, and Chastity.

First Prelude.—Let us place ourselves in spirit in the poor stable of Bethlehem. Kneel before the crib, from which, lying on hard straw, wrapped in lowly swaddling clothes, a most lovely Child looks at us.

Second Prelude.—A devout prayer to understand well the lessons of obedience, poverty, and chastity that the Infant Jesus gives to us.

First Point. The Crib Teaches Us Obedience.—Consider: The disobedience of Adam plunged the whole human race into misery. Jesus, the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity, wants to heal our misfortune by His most perfect obedience. He, therefore, at His entrance into the world, says, "Holocausts for sin did not please thee. Then said I: Behold I come: in the head of the book it is written of Me: that I should do Thy will, O God" (Hebr. x. 6).

This little Child in the crib will one day say, "I came down from heaven not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John vi. 38). Jesus, then, brings obedience to earth. Behold how He allows Himself to be handled by Mary at her will. She wraps Him in swaddling clothes, places Him in the arms of Joseph, takes Him on her lap or lays Him down in the manger; the Infant Jesus, at whose command legions of angels stand, permits it all. He does not murmur, does not contradict, shows no dissatisfaction, no resistance. He has come to do the will of His Father and that will is that for the present He be treated as a helpless child by those taking God's place on earth in His behalf.

Behold here the Model of religious obedience. I must likewise be a speechless child in the hands of my Superiors, without choice, without self-will. Obedience is the perfect holocaust of ourselves, by which we renounce our own will, to subject it to God in the person of His representatives. Now

then, ask yourself: Have I always been before my Superiors a mute, speechless child? Whence then my discontent whenever an order or a restriction of my Superiors does not suit me? Have I not contradicted them, or have I not made them bear the grief of knowing that I, instead of being a child without a will of my own, show much, yea, very much self-will?...

O heavenly Father, I offer Thee the obedience of Thy divine Son in reparation for all shortcomings in my obedience... Divine Infant, who hast given me the most beautiful example of obedience, bind me by the ties of this virtue, as Thy Mother bound Thy hands and feet with the swaddling clothes. Help me never to withdraw these bands, that I may lead a life of perfect obedience, being entirely at the beck of my Superiors, until the day when I can say with Thee, "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit."

SECOND POINT. THE CRIB TEACHES US HOLY POVERTY.—Consider: The Infant ly-

ing before you is the God of heaven and earth. All has been made by Him and nothing without Him. He can truly say, "The Father loveth the Son, and He hath given all things into His hands (John iii. 35), gold, silver, and jewels, and all the treasures of the earth.

In the stable of Bethlehem everything seems to contradict this! There is no trace of wealth; on the contrary, all speaks of poverty, of such poverty that the poorest child we know is not so poor as was the little Babe in the manger. This poverty will steadily increase, for, says St. Bernard, "the Lord was poor in the crib, poorer in His life, poorest on the cross." Poverty is His bride, whom He espoused in the crib in a mysterious manner, a spouse that He loves tenderly and that shall accompany Him to Nazareth, to Egypt, to Judea, yea, to Calvary, to the cross, where He may more truly than at any other time say, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (Luke

ix. 58). O God, what poverty in the crib! Remember, my soul, that this poverty was freely chosen. This Infant could have been born in a palace. Yet, to give me an example, He preferred poverty to wealth . . . Consider how humiliating this poverty was for Him, how much contempt it caused Him to suffer from men. . . Behold, likewise, how painful it was for Him. The cold makes Him shudder, the hard straw chafes His tender limbs. . . Nevertheless, He embraces poverty, loves it as His bride, and nothing in the world is able to separate Him from it. . . O divine Infant, what an example for me! My poverty generally is not humiliating for me; on the contrary, it commands the esteem of men; yet do I not often seek to escape the slight humiliations that now and then are connected with it? Do I willingly ask permission for trifling things? How do I bear any want occurring in food or clothing? O my soul, remember that on the day of profession, you chose holy poverty as spouse; nobody forced you; you were free; yet now

since you deliberately took it upon yourself, that you might imitate the example of Jesus, it is your duty to love poverty, and every earthly attachment is an act of disloyalty toward your vow.

Third Point. The Crib Teaches Us Holy Chastity.—Holy Scripture says of Jesus Christ that "He feedeth among the lilies" (Cant. vi. 2). Even at His birth this prophecy was fulfilled. Behold, only pure, chaste persons surround the little Redeemer: Mary, the Virgin of virgins, Joseph, the virginal spouse of the Virgin Mother. At the Incarnation purity had almost entirely disappeared from the world; Jesus Christ will return it and restore its luster. His mouth will one day announce to the world, "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. v. 8). His heart is the fountain from which the waters flow which can efface all impurity. His whole life was employed in fighting the spirit of fornication which plunges men into perdition. Jesus in the crib teaches us purity by the mortifica-

tion to which He subjects Himself, for mortification is the necessary condition for preservation of purity. The open stable, the hard couch, the coarse straw, the scanty coverings, all exclaim: "If you desire to remain pure, mortify yourself, for mortification alone gives self-control; among the thorns only, the lily remains pure and intact." O my soul, what will you say now? You love purity, its heavenly beauty attracts you, you would like to equal the angels. But do you love the mortification of the body and of the heart? Do you practise continually the abnegation of all that flatters the senses? Remember well what has been written: "They that are Christ's have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences" (Gal. v. 24).

O Jesus, purity of virgins, who feedest among the lilies, by Thy love of purity, grant me the grace to preserve my soul unsullied and to make use of all the means at my disposal for obtaining this end. Graciously accept the renewal of my holy vows which I

lay down at Thy feet; at the same time grant me the strength and grace I need to understand and obey Thy lessons from the crib. Amen.

Prayer after Meditation.

MEDITATION III.

Heaven.

First Prelude.—Represent to yourself our lovable Redeemer in the full brightness of His beauty. He tells us, "Be glad and rejoice for your reward is great in heaven" (Luke vi. 23).

Second Prelude.—An ardent prayer to be animated with a great desire for the eternal possessions, and with strength to bear the present sufferings joyfully.

First Point. The Reward of Heaven Is an Overflowing Joy.—What is all the good that we do for God in comparison to what we ought to do? We do a little more, it is true, than people in the world; but remember that after having performed all we had to do we are but unprofitable servants,

barely fulfilling their duty. Yet even this little the infinite goodness of God is willing to reward with an infinite reward! "For I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not to be compared with the glory to come, that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18). "The eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). All the beauty, gold, and jewels of the world, all worldly joys and enjoyments have no value when contrasted with the delight that is in store for us. "I Myself," speaks the Lord, "I, the wealth of heaven, the joy of angels, the light of the Father, the mirror of His glory, I Myself shall be Thy exceeding great reward" (Gen. xv. 1). We shall see millions and millions of angels, the cherubim and seraphim, the apostles, martyrs, confessors, and virgins; at their head, Mary the most beautiful and glorious! We shall see God; His loving eye will rest upon us; we shall sing His praise and exalt and be filled

with the excess of His house; we shall overflow with joy, and be inundated in a region of light and glory and bliss. O happy hour! Yea, my soul, desire, long to be there, where such joy will be yours. "When shall I come and appear before the face of God?" (Ps. xli. 3.) When will they tell me: "We shall go into the house of the Lord" (Ps. cxxi. 1)?

But what must I do to participate in this reward? Does God demand extraordinary deeds from me to acquire this happiness? "If the price frightens you," says St. Augustine, " be consoled—the poor widow purchased heaven for two farthings; yea, it is cheaper yet; for a drink of cold water, yea, for less, you may acquire it: Have a good will, and heaven is yours."

O my soul, God demands no severe acts of penance, no hard labors for the salvation of souls, no martyr's death, no blood. He demands simply this: Your Holy Rule, and nothing but that. Should I not willingly accept the little sufferings of life, to obtain greater glory in heaven? God gives me that

suffering, that work, as a coin with which to purchase eternal happiness; even the most insignificant work, every step, every breath, every ejaculation, may become such a coin. Then why should I not make use of them?

O God, pardon my former folly and ingratitude!

Second Point. The Reward of Heaven Is Unmixed Joy.—Suffering of any kind is our daily lot here below. Consolation and joy are seldom our portion, and but for a short time. This world is a valley of tears in which few roses, but many thorns, are found. Yet when the happy day dawns, when we are called to receive our reward, all the sufferings shall be changed into joy. O my God, what consoling promises Thou givest me in this regard! "They shall not hunger, nor thirst, neither shall the heat nor the sun strike them, for He that is merciful to them shall be their shepherd, and at the fountains of waters He shall give them drink" (Isaias xlix. 10). "And you are they who have continued with Me in My temptations. And I

dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom; and may sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Luke xxii. 28-30). "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away" (Apocalypse xxi. 4).

"And night shall be no more: and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign forever and ever" (xxii. 5). O God, how glorious! And all this joy is destined for me, if I am faithful! "And he that shall overcome shall possess these things, and I will be his God; and he shall be My son" (xxi. 7). Remember, my soul, that it is God who gives you these promises, He who is faithful to His words. Has He not declared, "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away"? What trouble, what exertion

could appear too great to obtain such happiness? O happy suffering that causes my bliss! "How lovely are Thy tablernacles, O Lord of hosts! My soul longeth and fainteth for the courts of the Lord" (Ps. lxxxiii. 1). "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, O Lord: they shall praise Thee for ever and ever" (Ps. lxxxiii. 5). "I shall go over into the place of the wonderful tabernacle, even to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise" (Ps. xli. 5). How long still, O Lord, how long?

THIRD POINT. THE REWARD OF HEAVEN IS ETERNAL JOY.—What is the life of man compared with eternity? A disappearing smoke, a swift-passing arrow. If Methusalem had worked and suffered from the first moment of his existence to the last, his work would have been short in comparison to the eternal reward. Our age shall surely not surpass a hundred years. Oh, how short is this time compared with eternity! And for this short work I shall receive an eternal reward! As long as God shall rule, I shall

rule with Him; as long as He is glorified, my glory shall last and my happiness shall have no end. Here all joy is of short duration and the whole life of man consists in joy and grief that meet and intermingle everywhere. The joy of union is succeeded by the sorrow of separation and the enjoyment of possession by the pain of loss. Not so when we are with Thee, O Lord! "We have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven" (2 Cor. v. 1). "For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (iv. 18) "For that which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation, worketh for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory" (iv. 17). How the holy penitents, hermits and martyrs rejoice now! They planted their seed in the soil of short earthly sufferings and harvested eternal joys. How happy is the good penitent thief, who for a few moments of suffering received the joys of paradise! How I shall one day deem myself happy on account of the suffering en-

dured here below! If I can then repent of anything, it shall surely be of not having worked and suffered more. O my soul, how easy ought everything to appear when I consider heaven, when I raise my eyes to the eternal hills, from whence eternal glory sends its foreshadow. "Why art thou mournful, O my soul, and why dost thou trouble thyself?" Rather exclaim with St. Paul, "I have a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, a thing by far the better" (Phil. i. 23).

O my Lord and God, what delight shall fill my soul when Thy sweet voice shall resound: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom, which hath been prepared for you" (Matt. xxv. 34). Grant that the overflowing, undisturbed and eternal joy of heaven be ever present to my mind when sufferings oppress or humiliations are my share. Would that I could exclaim with St. Ignatius, "How sordid the earth when I look at the sky."

Prayer after Meditation.

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